Photo taken during trip home. Wiley on left with H.E. Sybrant.

Wiley's Island

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of the Sisters of St Joseph
Orange, Calif.

--INTRODUCTION--

This is the TRUE STORY of one of the many thousands of boys that were born in the period of time near the end or after World War I, who were caught up in a time in History, in which a few fanatic leaders were determined to, and very nearly did conquer the world. It is my story, I will tell it for you the best I can so that you might partially experience it as I did.

Through all the years that I have thought of writing about this experience, I have puzzled over how it might be written so that it might capture the events as they happened to me. For my children, grandchildren and friends that have urged me to put this on paper, and for any one else that might read it, I sincerely hope that I have found a way to tell the story so that you can somehow experience the happenings, as I did. This will not be totally possible for the reason that you know how it ends. At the time I was there, I did not, of course, know how it was going to turn out.

Therefore, in order to convey this story as I want to, I believe that first you must know the boy that went through this experience and be able to track the happenings of that time. To do this, you will need to be reminded of the history that occurred during these times, and to look back at them as I can.

I will therefore, write each chapter in three parts with the following organization: 1. AS I LIVED IT: 2. IN RETROSPECT: and 3. AS HISTORY RECORDED IT. This will cause some problems to the reader who may be anxious to "get on with story", but please be patient and be refreshed with the History of those days. In several chapters, "IN RETROSPECT" and "HISTORY" will be combined.

INTRODUCTION

In order to "know the boy that experienced these happenings" you must first grow up with me. I hope that I can make this part interesting enough, that you will not want to skip ahead. I really want you to be able to live the experience as I did.

So, if you will, come grow up with me and live through these circumstances. Newspaper stories and others have said that I was a "HERO". I have never felt like one. I have always felt only that I was just an ordinary kid that lived through an unusual happening and that any one else under the same circumstances would probably have survived in essentially the same way.

1 — GROWING UP

AS I REMEMBER

My earliest remembrance is of living with Mom and Dad, two older brothers, (Gilbert and Austin) and a baby sister (Una). Another brother, (Owen) was away from home in the hospital. I was aware of him for the reason that he would come home for a short time and then return to the hospital. While he was home he could walk only with the aid of crutches. My recollections are that we would get up in the morning, Dad would have coffee and breakfast and go off to work. My two older brothers would also have breakfast and go off to school. During the day I would pretty much entertain myself while Mom did her house work and took care of the Baby Sister. When my brothers came home from school, they would run out to play and I would chase after them. Railroad tracks went close by one side of our house, so we played mostly in an area to the side of the house away from the Railroad. I can't recall what we played, but I can recall that it involved a lot of running. Dad would come home from work and we would have dinner, sit around the table by the light of a kerosene lamp until 8:00 o'clock and then it was bed time. I do remember Dad's rule of 8:00 o'clock bed time very very clearly.

These early days were very much the same, with variations for different days of the week. Saturday night was bath night and change of clothes. Monday was wash day and all the bedding and clothing we had taken off on Saturday was washed in a hand operated washing machine that sat out in the yard. Baths were taken with a wash basin and a wash cloth. The water was heated in a teakettle on the kitchen stove. The clothes were dried by hanging on a clothes line. On Tuesdays, Mom would do the ironing.

One day, Gib and Aus took me in tow early in the morning and we hung around outside all day. Dr. Smith drove out from town and took his black bag into the house. That evening we had a new brother (James). He was named James for Mom's Father with the middle name of Luther for Dad's brother.

A few days later, I recall clearly that everyone was talking about a guy named "Lindy" that had flown from New York to Paris. I could not get excited because I had no idea where New York or Paris were. At that time I don't recall ever being as far from home as up town, except for one time. On that occasion, Dad took me to town on one of his trips. We walked, of course, about one mile down the railroad tracks. He took me in a barber shop and I sat while he got a hair cut. He then ask if I would like to get one. I remember being scared to death as this was the first time I had seen people close up other than my family and our one set of neighbors. He was unable to get me into the chair. Dad was very gentle with me and took me home without a hair cut. There were many times that he was not very gentle with me (probably for good cause), but this time he was, and I will always remember that.

Other excitement of that summer included a visit from Mom's father "Grandpa Kemp" This would be the only time I could remember seeing any grandparent. The other three were dead prior to my birth. Grandpa Kemp took us boys to a little circus that was stopping by. Three years later, Grandpa died of a heart attack at age 60.

That fall I was dressed in new overalls and sent off to kindergarten. Our house was west of town and the school house was at the west edge of town. It was a two story brick building and housed eight grades. Kindergarten lasted all day, the same as the other classes. On my first day I was delivered to the kindergarten room by my brothers and I walked back home with them. The shortest route was down the

railroad tracks. I remember being very insecure and always ready to hurry home at the end of the day. This was the first time I had seen kids my age. It was the first time I had been around kids other than my brothers and sisters. I remember that all the kids seemed to know each other and I was a real stranger among them. Going to school made my world a little bigger, but not much. I went to school and then home. We just never even went to the very small down town section of Big Springs, Nebraska.

I missed quite a bit of school because it seemed that any thing in the way of sickness that came along caught up with me. Then during the first or second grade I went home from school sick. Mom must have sensed something special as she called Dr. Smith. He came out to the house (we never did go to his office) and after looking me over took some swabs of my throat. A couple of days later he announced that I had Diptheria. The County Health Department came out and placed quarantine signs on our house. Dad had to move into town and stay at the hotel so that he could continue to work. No one except Dr. Smith was allowed to enter or leave our house. Mom and us kids were essentially in jail. As I got better, the other kids got sick. We were quarantined for a total of six weeks. Dad would get the groceries and walk out and leave them in the yard and, after he backed up, we could go out and pick them up. The milkman would pour milk from a bottle into a container that we would set out for him, with out allowing the bottle to touch the container we put out. At the end of the six weeks, we all went into town and stayed overnight in the hotel while the Health Department fumigated our house. Mom and us kids spent six weeks cooped up in that little house. Sounds pretty bad, but somehow we all survived. It was probably not much different than normal, except for not going to school.

A year or so later, my little world expanded again when we moved from our house by the railroad tracks to

a small house on the north west edge of town. To us it seemed like a big house and even had a kitchen and bedrooms. By living here I could go to school and come home by myself, and was allowed to visit the homes of school friends. I remember being amazed at other people having such things as radios and electric lights. It also caused me to feel somewhat inferior because we did not. Another thing that totally amazed me was one of the houses I visited had indoor plumbing. This was really something. Our having an outhouse was not a problem in my mind as that was the same as at school.

In spite of all this, I recall many happy times at this house. In June of 1931, once again, all of us kids were ushered outside while Dr. Smith and Dad spent most of the day inside with the famous black bag and again that night there was a new member of our family. This time it was Lois. I was totally fascinated by this tiny newcomer and Mom would have to run me out of the house and tell me to leave the baby alone.

That fall my little world grew again as we packed up and moved to Glenwood, Iowa. Glenwood was, to me, a big town with neon lights and lots of stores. It was a typical Iowa Farm town. It was the county seat of Mills County so the Court House was there. The Court House was in the center of town and was located on a block square piece of ground. Around this square was located the business section. Highway 34 ran east and west across the south side of the square. In town, it was named Sharp Street. One block west of the square, Highway 34 turned and went south to Pacific Junction and Plattsmouth, Nebr., with Highway 275 going north through the hills to Council Bluffs and Omaha. Our house was about one mile west of the square, with the property adjoining Sharp Street. Our house faced a short dirt street (one block long) with three houses on the west side and five on the east side. There were no street signs, but we were told by the

neighbors that the street name was Maple. Our house number was 4. So we had a genuine street address. (4 No. Maple St.) About two years later, Gib came home from school and was laughing about the fact that the city was putting up street signs and our street wasn't named Maple street after all. It was Park Avenue. We checked the information with the city as it was difficult to believe our little dirt street one block long was named Park Avenue. It was indeed Park Avenue and it still is today. I was in fourth grade at the West Hill School. Gib and Aus had to walk across town to the Jr. Hi and High School. Now it was my turn to look after a younger member going to and from school (Una). Shortly after, Dad was to lose his job, due to the Depression. The family was in for some very tough days. Fortunately we had a house to live in. It was bought with the money inherited from Grandpa Kemp.

The rest of my grade school days were completed under conditions of real poverty. Our diet was very poor. Many days we had only potatoes and gravy with bread and oleomargarine. Our Sunday treat was generally soup beans. My school studies were very easy for me. I continued to be sick a lot but had no problem keeping up.

Our Summers were spent playing in our yards with games of "work up" softball in the street in front. Cars going by were not a problem. The only car in the area was fully aware of our games and went by with care. My best friend during these years was Bob Reist. Bob was a year or two younger than I, but we always seemed to find that we liked playing the same way. We spent untold hours in the gullies formed by the small creek that went by our place, "Tinkle Branch". We had almost no toys to play with but made up games as we went along. A bunch of tall weeds grew in the creek area that when dried, made excellent spears. The root part formed the point and the stem, the handle. These weeds made ready made spears about six feet long. We had many spear fights in the jungles of Tinkle Branch.

One summer, Bob and I spent hours smashing bricks into dust and putting it in old bottles we found at the dump. This became "gold" that had to be hidden and recorded on treasure maps. The treasure maps had to be guarded carefully and even fake maps drawn for rival members of the neighborhood gold rush gang to find and attempt to locate our gold. The whole neighborhood got involved. This included some of the older boys. (Austin and a friend Clifford Stille). We spent the whole summer making, hiding and finding, gold dust. As we really got into the game, we found brick dust slow to make so substituted readily available shelled corn.

Another summer, I remember Bob and I sitting talking and letting our imaginations run a little wild. As we talked we could hear Austin and Clifford also talking in the Stille Barn. In our imaginations, they were building rubber guns and were planning to wage a war on us. So we got busy and built some rubber guns. These guns were merely wood sawed into the rough shape of a gun with a spring type clothes pin on the back. The rubber bands were made by cutting up old innertubes. These tubes were made of natural rubber and made good bands. When we were all set with two guns apiece and lots of ammunition, we challenged Austin and Cliff. They, of course, were totally unaware of our imaginations so asked for a few days to get prepared.

Thus began a summer of "Rubber Gun Wars" that was to encompass our whole neighborhood and some of the adjoining ones. As the wars proceeded, the guns became more sophisticated and the rules of combat better defined. At the end of the summer we had rubber band machine guns capable of firing as many as twenty rubber bands. I remember it being a fun summer with no one getting hurt.

Each summer also required the planting and harvesting

of a big garden. Our house sat on one of the three lots we owned. About a lot and a half was put in garden. One lot was always potatoes and the rest, other vegetables. The potatoes were grown, harvested and placed in the cellar for use all year. In the summer we had fresh vegetables and some were canned for use during the winter. Mother supervised the garden, but us kids did the work of planting, cultivating and harvesting.

Toward the end of the sixth grade, we were allowed to try out for the Band. I didn't have an instrument, but I knew that the school had a bass drum and that if I could play it, I would be able to attend all the football and basketball games for free. This was better than sneaking into the football games and not being able to go to the basketball games. So I tried out and found that a neighbor boy (Blaine Hayes) had the same idea and he beat me to the bass drum. They also needed someone to clang cymbals so I took them. So Blaine and I practiced with the band and during our seventh and eighth grade, played with the High School Band. This way we were able to attend the football and basketball games. Didn't learn much music, but did get into the games.

When Gib graduated from High School, there were no jobs available so he joined the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). This required that he leave home and live in a camp, at first near Des Moines and later in Red Oak. The pay was $30 a month with $25 sent home and $5 for the boy. They worked on various soil conservation projects.

Two years later, Austin would follow, after trying to enlist in the Navy and being turned down for a problem of extra high arches in his feet.

1 — GROWING UP
(IN RETROSPECT)

When we lived by the railroad tracks, we lived in a one room house that was owned by the Union Pacific Railroad. It had been built for use as a Bunk House for temporary workers. Dad rented this place from the Union Pacific, and we all lived in the one large room. The beds were at one end, the kitchen at the other with a large dining room table in the middle. Our living room was really that dining room table, as everything we did took place there. Home work, games etc. I was born in that house on January 18, 1922. We had moved to Hershey Nebraska where Una was born on August 14, 1924, and then moved back to Big Springs to the same house where Jim was born on May 10, 1927. Except for the time in Hershey, we lived in that one room for about eight years. Dad worked for the railroad during this time. He left the railroad and went to work for the County, grading country roads. His changing jobs required that we move out of the railroad owned house.

I have talked here about how small my world was and how it grew some with each move. To experience this story it is important that you be able to grasp the world as it was and the world as I was able to view it. The world I was born into was very large. It took days to cross the country and weeks to cross the oceans. The news came only to those who could read newspapers and or had radios. If you didn't read you were aware of only a very small part of a very large world. Also, people did not travel very much. None of the people I knew were able to tell me about the outside world, because they hadn't been anywhere either.

As I learned to read and could read the news, my world grew greatly. There was, however, not much happening

in the world. Hitler was coming to power in Germany, but no one was paying much attention. There were no wars going on. The big news, and about the only news, was about the depression and the crimes of the day. This is why Lindbergh made such big news by flying the Atlantic. The world was starved for news and he made some. I don't mean to detract from his accomplishment but in retrospect it was overplayed somewhat.

1 — GROWING UP
(HISTORY 1922 TO 1936)

There is not much to say about the history of this time except for the several things touched on "IN RETROSPECT". The United States was suffering through a terrible depression, Lindbergh flew to Paris, and Hitler was coming to power. The world was actually very quiet during these years.

2 — HIGH SCHOOL

(AS I REMEMBER)

The High School in Glenwood was a 4 year school (grades 9 thru 12). My 9th grade was in the old building on the east side of town. It was in the same building as the Jr. High. There was one very large room called the Home Room and each student shared (2 per desk) a regular school desk. We kept our books and supplies in the desk and had our free periods for study in this room. The desks were not equipped for locking but there was never anything left in them that could cause a theft problem. When we attended classes we would leave the large room and go to a class room and at the end of the class period return to the home room. All the Assemblies and Pep Meetings prior to games were held in the Home Room. Except for a long walk through some very cold weather, my first year went well.

The school had a policy of selling Activity Tickets for $2.70, that allowed the student to attend all school functions. This included Sports Events and Activitity Programs. You could buy it all at once or pay 10 cents a week for 27 weeks. With two or three kids in the ages that could use the tickets, there was no way our parents could afford the tickets. Dad made $5.00 a week when he could work.

I dropped out of the band at the beginning of the 9th grade for the reason that a new rule required band members to have the Activity Ticket in order to get into the games. I could see no benefit to myself in continuing to clang cymbals if I had to come up with the money for an activity ticket. Knowing this rule would be in effect this year, I carried papers for the Omaha World Herald in order to earn enough for the ticket.

The Paper Route was a real problem for me in that I had to deliver them after school and then hurry home to do the chores. I had worked all summer at it in order to earn the $2.70 plus a little more. I had about 30 customers and made 5 cents a week on each one. I was flabbergasted to find out that some of the customers were willing to read the paper, but unwilling to pay up at the end of the week. It took the profit from three paying customers to break even for one non-paying customer.

I tried more and more to fit in with the group, but found it most difficult for the reason that I had only overalls to wear when most of the boys wore dress pants and I never had money so that I could go down town with the group for a coke after school. Also, the mothers of some of the kids had organized a dance club that met once a month at the armory and danced to records. Clothes and lack of cash kept me from this activity also.

I tried to solve the cash problem by applying for jobs anywhere I thought I might have a chance. I was able to find and win a job working in an Ice Cream shop. This shop was in a small building located on Highway 275, about a block north of Sharp Street. Two boys were hired. Lawrence Workman and myself. The summer started with Laurie and a young woman running it but I was able to work with them most of the summer. I worked from 8:00 AM until Noon by myself, then Laurie took over and I walked about 1 mile home to rest, then a mile back. We both worked from 5:00 until 10:00 PM. That was 9 hours a day for me and 10 for Laurie. Our pay was $4.00 a week for 7 days.

In August, Laurie and his dad were going to go fishing in Minnesota. They asked if I wanted to go along. I had to go as this was a trip of a lifetime for me. Todd, (the owner) worked out a way for help from his restaurant to fill in while we were both gone. We

caught a lot of nice Bass, went swimming, and lived in a tent for a whole week. It was a really great trip and I enjoyed it immensely. Problem was, by the time I bought some gear and paid my share of the food, (even though I'm sure Laurie's Dad subsidized me), I wound up the summer with very little showing for my summer's labor except the memories. I had worked all summer to solve my cash problem and ended up with very little. I had planned on some pants and shirts. So back to overalls.

At the beginning of my sophomore year, the new school at the west end of town was completed, or almost completed. We started without lockers and lacked some other things. It was totally finished by Thanksgiving. To us, it was quite a place. New, of course, with lockers down the halls that we could store our books and supplies in. The floors were nice, all the furniture was new and the building included a gym for basketball and an auditorium. The boys playing basketball no longer had to trod down to the old armory for practice or for the games. It was an exciting time for us to be able to attend the new school and we all were quite proud of it.

I continued to try to better fit in with the group and was able to salvage enough money for an Activity Ticket and to join the Dance Club. I was also able to work out one pair of good pants.

The Dance Club was a very good thing for me. It allowed me to better associate with the group without having to have a formal date. The club was run by a few of the mothers and only the members could attend. We had cards and before the dance began we would sign up with the girls for the dances. This encouraged the boys to sign up several girls and still save the last dance for the favorite. The scheme provided for good mixing of the boys and girls.

Things at home remained about the same with Dad

continuing to work at jobs as they became available. Much of the time he was out of work. Gib and Austin's money was sent home but Mother and Dad would not use it. Even though the rules of the CCC was that it was to be used by the family, Mom and Dad could not. Gib and Aus overcame this somewhat by paying the taxes and buying things for the house.

Between my sophomore and junior year, I again worked at the Ice Cream Shop. Same hours, same pay, but this summer I did not go fishing so at the end of the summer I had some funds for clothes and cokes.

I continued to do well with my studies. At the beginning of the Junior Year we had to chose between a set of courses designed for College Prep or a Commercial Course. College Prep included additional Math and Physics. The Commercial Course included Typing, Shorthand and Bookkeeping. Only the so called "rich kids" took the College Prep Course. There really weren't any rich kids, it was just poor and really poor. Anyway, there was no way I could see any possibility of going to college so I opted for the Commercial Course.

One of the highlights of the School Year was the Junior Senior Dance. It was customary for the Juniors to foot the bill and provide a banquet and dance for the Seniors in the spring just before Graduation. To raise the money for this, the class was allowed as sophomores to sell candy at all the school functions and as Juniors to put on a class play and charge admission. I tried out for the play but was not selected for one of the parts. I volunteered to be the stage manager. So that I was. I raised the curtains and ran the lights. I remember one of the things that the play called for was the doorbell to ring at the very beginning of the play. To accomplish this, I arranged to borrow a transformer and bell from the Physics Lab and arranged for it to ring when I switched one of the light switches on the control

panel. It worked just fine during all the rehearsals. And so did all the other sequences of curtains up, down and lights on and off. It was also customary for the class to put on the play at the State School for the feeble minded as one of the dress rehearsals. So I packed up the transformer and bell and headed for the State School to set up the doorbell sequence as well as learn about the curtains and lights there. Everything seemed to be alright and came time for the opening scene, I flipped on the doorbell, and nothing. I finally called out "ring ring" and got the play started only to smell something very hot. The smell of burning insulation spread through the stage and the auditorium. At the end of the play as I gathered up the transformer and bell, I found the transformer was a melted mess. Turns-out, the State School had its own power plant and made 110 volt direct current instead of AC. I had to hustle around and locate another transformer for the night of the big play. So I got an early lesson in Physics without being able to take the College Prep course.

At the end of my Junior year I found I was eligible to join the local National Guard. The pay was $1.00 each meeting and there was one meeting a week with a few weekend meetings. Also there would be a two week camp during the summer at $1.00 each day. This income along with some odd jobs during that summer helped me through the summer and my Senior year without having to work the Ice Cream Shop. This was much better, as working the Ice Cream Shop required every night of the summer while the other kids were out dating etc.

During my High School years I developed a friendship with a neighbor boy named Tom Vandershule. We became quite close and walked to and from school together each day. Tom and his Dad had a Model T Ford which we could use for dating. Dates were not too frequent for the reason of lack of funding, but we did manage to arrange for about one a week. Wiener roasts at selected places in the country were one of our

favorites. I had arranged for Tom to date Mary Lefever one time and they hit it off pretty good. As I recall, I moved around among the girls quite a bit and never did have a real steady with the possible exception of Hester Wright for a time. At any rate I got to know them all a little bit, and as I recall that was fine with me.

ATHLETICS -- Gib was good at running distances and pole-vaulting. He did well in track for the mile and half mile run and did some pole vaulting. In his senior year he was elected Captain of the Track Team and lettered the only two years he attended Glenwood High. Austin was the tallest boy in his class so he played Center on the Basketball Team. Dad would not allow either of them to play football because of the possibility of injury and no way to pay the doctor bills. Austin was big enough that he would have done well on the Football Team.

I tried track and basketball in the Jr. High. I was such a skinny kid that I felt totally out of place in track or basketball shorts. I was almost 6 feet tall and weighed barely 110 pounds. As a Freshman I did try track but found that I could not compete. I just did not have the strength. So I dropped out.

The War in Europe started at the beginning of my senior year. It was not a surprise to most of us when it began, as the news had indicated for some time that it was only a matter of time. One of the items in the news was concerning President Roosevelt asking Congress for funds in order to provide supplies for the Allies under a Lend Lease Plan. There was much discussion about the U.S. getting involved in even this way. I remember thinking that our country would have to get involved and that this would be a good first step. In one of our classes, we chose to debate this issue. So three of us took the pro-view and three the con-view and we had a debate. I was sure, the three of us on the pro Lend Lease could win hands

down because that was the only way to go. At the end of the debate, we had a vote and the cons won overwhelming. This was a good lesson for me in that these kids probably reflected the thinking of their parents and that most of our citizens at that time opposed any kind of involvement.

During the fall weekends, the National Guard stepped up its activities and we spent a number of weekends in training. I remember in particular some of the maneuvers we held in the timber west of town, where we would divide up and half would disperse and the rest of us would try to advance into these woods. We learned how easy it is for a defending group to hide and how difficult it was to find and route them out. The one experience I remember in particular involved our pointing real guns (no firing pins but real) at the other guys. I had played with rubber guns and cap guns all during my childhood, pointing them at other kids and firing. In the training that Gib and Aus had given me with regard to the real guns we had and as we went hunting, was to never point a real gun, loaded or not, at someone else. Squirrels and rabbits O.K. but not at a human being. I recall very clearly having trouble pointing this real gun at another guy.

Toward the end of my Senior year I had to start considering what I was going to do when school was out. Jobs were just not available except for possible farm help. The CCC camps were beginning to get a poor name, and neither Gib or Aus would recommend that approach. It seemed to me that the war was bound to spread and that the Navy was probably the best place to spend the war.

My mind was well made up by the end of the school year that I would try to join the Navy. Remembering Austin's experience, I wasn't sure they would accept me but I intended to try.

In May of 1940, I graduated from High School.

2 - HIGH SCHOOL

(IN RETROSPECT)

I grew a great deal during my four years in High School. They were tough years and were haunted by the poverty that we experienced as a family, and by my being such a skinny kid. I began to get over my feelings of inferiority but was never able to shake it completely. The two things that helped me the most were good grades in school and being able to belong to the Dance Club. All in all they were happy years and I still look back on them with much fondness.

2 -- HIGH SCHOOL

(HISTORY 1936 thru June 1940)

The History of these four years tell of the rise of Hitler and Mussolini and of the first nine months of World War II. These events had little effect on the happenings in and around Glenwood other than the news. Life went on and the depression lingered on. The various government programs to try to stir the economy out of its doldrums did have some effect. The CCC camps offered work for many young men and the WPA programs gave work to many of the unemployed men. My Dad worked as a carpenter to build the New High School for almost two years. This was most helpful to our family, as we were able to go from almost nothing to eat to a little to eat.

In Europe, Hitler had consolidated his grip on Germany and after grabbing The Rhineland in 1936, Austria in 1938 and by starting to invade Czechoslovakia, forced England and France to recognize that they had no choice but to go to war to try to stop him. These first months were a disaster for France and England and by the end of June 1940, Hitler had completed the conquest and occupation of Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France.

Russia in the meantime took advantage of the events going on, and invaded Finland to add to their own territory.

It is interesting to remember back to these times and recall how far away this War was, and how indifferent most of us were to it. The beginning of a War that would soon occupy our every hour of every day, seemed so distant.

3 - BOOT CAMP

(AS I REMEMBER)

Within a week of High School Graduation, I was ready to take the steps of joining the Navy. Early one morning, after telling Mother where I was going, I walked over town and then up Highway 275 to the north edge of town and hitched a ride to Council Bluffs. The Navy Recruiting Office was in the Post Office. The office was manned by one man in a Navy Uniform. I told him what I wanted, and he had me fill out and sign some papers and then gave me a written test to take. At the end of the tests, he looked them over and looked me over and said everything seemed O.K. He gave me a form for one of my Parents to sign and told me to return one week later, and I would be taken to the main office in Omaha for a physical and more tests. I hitched a ride back to Glenwood and Mom signed permission for me to join up.

A week later, I hitch hiked back up to the Bluffs and along with several others, was taken by bus to Omaha. A Doctor there gave us physical examinations and we took some more written tests. During the physical we were, of course, weighed and measured. That day I weighed 132 lbs. and was 5 feet 11 1/2 inches tall. The Doctor told me that everything seemed to be alright, but that I was underweight. He started to tell me to go home and try to gain some weight and then he hesitated and said, "Oh what the heck, that Navy Chow would put some weight on me". He changed my weight to read 136 and I was in. We were taken back to Council Bluffs and told to report back on July 2, 1940 for swearing in. On July 2, I again hitched a ride to the Bluffs and again we were taken to Omaha for the swearing in ceremony. We were then told that the Training Center at Great Lakes was full and that

we would not be able to report there until two weeks later. We were in the Navy and our pay would start but to return in two weeks for transportation to Great Lakes. I was given a bus ticket to Glenwood and return.

Two weeks later on July 16th I rode the bus back to Omaha and was put on a train to Chicago. It was a long ride and I was both anxious to go yet I felt much anxiety about leaving home. The train ride was long and I remember watching the scenery every mile that I could. I remember thinking that Red Oak was as far East as I had ever been and here I was going all the way to Chicago. I remember crossing the Mississippi, even though it was dark at the time. We got to Chicago early in the morning and were then loaded on the North Shore Line for the trip up to Great Lakes. The North Shore Line was essentially Street Cars on an interurban line. We spent all day getting from Chicago to the Training Station. I remember how impressed I was with Chicago. We traveled through it for hours. This was quite an experience for me. I was really impressed with the size of the place. The big buildings just went on and on, mile after mile.

Upon arrival at the Training Station, we were fed and given some bunks for the night. The next morning we were formed into Recruit Companies, and after breakfast we were processed through the issuance of uniforms and other gear area. We stripped down and packaged our clothes and personal effects for shipment home and were issued uniforms, a hammock, mattress and toilet articles. We were then herded over to a single story barracks of wood construction. This barracks was totally bare except for some pipes about 5 inches in diameter that sorta formed pens. We were first shown how to take our hammocks and stretch them tightly between these pipes and how to tie them up. A properly stretched hammock does not swing. It is straight across. When you try to get in it, it rotates and dumps you face down on the floor. In this

barracks the hammocks were about four feet off the floor (deck). This height was for practice. We were told that aboard ship and over in the main camp they would be about seven or eight feet off the deck. Everyone fell out a few times before learning that you must center yourself very carefully and then sleep without moving. One arm out and you are face down on the floor. It was surprisingly easy to learn how to do this, and sleeping without moving is very restful.

I recall that during this first day, one of the guys came in and said that you could see Lake Michigan from the back steps. Several of us went out and found that from a certain position and by looking through the trees we could see the very blue water of the Lake. I recall how blue and beautiful it was. I had seen pictures of blue lakes but never believed that it could be this blue.

We were next told that we were in the "Detention" part of the Training Camp and that we would be there for the first three weeks of our 16 weeks of Basic Training. While we were in Detention we would not be allowed to have visitors or be in contact with anyone in the Main Camp. During our stay in Detention we must learn how to sleep in hammocks, wash and roll our clothes, learn Navy Terminology and learn the rudimentary skills of marching etc.

These first 3 weeks were pretty much the nightmare that the services at that time put their recruits through. As we learned to drill (all the marching and drilling including calisthenics were with rifles) there was much shouting and insulting from the Drill Instructors. The slightest twitch while standing at attention was greeted with shouts such as "When are you going to stop picking your nose?" Daily inspection of the barracks and of the individuals were held. Also there were the shots and the sore arms.

The Training Station was a pretty place, with many large trees and large areas of grass. The morning hikes to breakfast were quite pleasant. I enjoyed being there.

Our Chief Drill Instructor was an older Chief Petty Officer. We were to be his last Recruit Company before he retired. For this reason, he would sometimes let down a little and enjoy some of the happenings with us. Our company was numbered 53-40. The 53 because it was the 53rd company that year and the -40 was for the year 1940. As our company was first formed, the Chief appointed a Recruit Company Commander, Platoon Leaders and Squad Leaders. There were two platoons of three squads. Our Recruit Company Commander was a kid with perhaps two years college and with ROTC training. One of the platoon leaders also had been in ROTC. I was appointed a squad leader for the reason of having a year in the National Guard and at least knew how to march. During the first week, the Chief told us that we were going to be his last group and that he wanted to have a first class company this time through. He also noted that he had done a little picking from the recruits as he put our company together. He told us that in the Main Camp, (referred to as Paradise compared to Detention) there was a competition each week to pick the best company. This competition was based on personnel inspections, barracks inspections, drilling and on some athletic competitions. The rewards, were being known as the "Rooster Company", being first to the mess hall and having extra liberties including being allowed to go as far as Chicago. He asked if we wanted to go for it or be just another company. Encouraged by our Recruit Company Commander (who lived in Chicago), we agreed to put in the necessary effort to try for the best. As a result of this, he formed teams for rowing, tug of war etc., and started training sessions while we were still in Detention. I did not get on any of these teams, but I worked to learn from the book the routine of calisthenics that

we would need to know and the use of the semaphore flags. I then led and drilled the company and individuals in these routines.

After our three weeks in detention we packed our sea bags, lashed up our hammocks, wrapped the hammock around the sea bag, and, hoisted them on our shoulders and marched over to Paradise. Here the barracks were two story brick buildings that lined a large parade ground and the hammocks were strung up seven feet above the decks with a small poop deck for use in getting in and out. In our first week in Paradise we won the Rooster Company Award and we were able to keep it for the duration of our stay. To win the award the first week in Paradise was very surprising as we were in competition with companies that were nearing the completion of their 16-week training. Our Chief told us he was really pleased and we were quite proud of ourselves. We spent a lot of extra effort in training and in cleaning, but we were always first in the chow line.

Our training in Paradise was a continuation of what was started in Detention. The Drill Instructors, however, let up some on the shouting and insults. We also spent some time on the rifle range learning the proper care of, and firing of the 30-06 Springfield Rifles that were the standard infantry weapon at that time. Every Sailor was required to have some proficiency in these weapons as it was always a possibility that he might be involved in a landing party. We also received training in the handling of boats and spent some time rowing whale boats around in an enclosed harbor on Lake Michigan.

SWIMMING --During our first week in Paradise, we were taken to the indoor swimming pool and told to put on our trunks. We were then lined up and led around to the deep end of the pool. One by one we were told to jump in and try to qualify as a swimmer by swimming to the far end and part of the way back. Some dove in

and swam it easily. Others struggled but made it, and some had to be pulled out. When my turn came, I "dove" in head first and came up almost vertical in the water. To shouts of kick your feet and swim I stroked my arms and kicked my feet and remained stationary in the water but at least with my head above it. They finally pulled me out. Those who qualified were tagged swimmers and the rest of us non-swimmers. On top of all the other activities, us non-swimmers had to report three times a week to the swimming pool for "Swimming Lessons". The lessons consisted of a talk on how to do the Crawl with stroking the arms, kicking the legs in scissor fashion and turning your head to get a breath each time your left arm was out of the water. We were also reminded that we had to keep our heads down, because if we raised our heads, our feet would sink. Then we dove in the deep end and tried to swim. I soon learned that by holding my breath, keeping my head down and stroking I could at least get to shallow water, but try as I might I could not rotate my head to get a breath of air without choking. There was no individual instructions, but we were allowed time each day to "practice" on our own.

SICK BAY -- As the weeks rolled by, I found myself getting thinner and thinner and feeling totally exhausted. My appetite become almost nil. At chow time I was eating only about half the food. I was also finding I had to get up each night for a trip to the bathroom. As we started our last week of training, I went out front of the barracks to help sweep up and found that I just could barely navigate and I also had a fever. I told the Chief and reported into Sick Bay. They took my temperature and plopped me in bed. I was told that I had Cat Fever which is a common ailment among recruits and is brought on by exhaustion. The training and extra effort of being in the Rooster Company plus swimming had just caught up with me. I wasn't given any medication, just rest. The first three days was a liquid diet of some type of

broth that was terrible. On the third day I ask the doctor about eating and he put me on a regular diet. I ate heartily and at the end of a week felt fine. I was released from Sick Bay and because my Company had graduated, I was assigned to a different one. I was not yet qualified as a swimmer but had completed all other training so I was assigned to help keep the barracks clean and take swimming lessons.

As the weeks went by, I knew I was not making any progress. I noticed that some of the kids were swimming with their heads out of the water. One day I tried this out in shallow water and found I could swim quite well that way. The next day I dove in and qualified easily.

When this company graduated, I was allowed to take my two weeks of Boot Leave. I went home and was there during the Annual Homecoming Festivities in October. It was really nice being home. For the first time in my life I had some money in my pocket that I felt I could spend. I enjoyed my family, my friends and had several dates including one to Peony Park in Omaha. At the end of the two weeks I had to return to Great Lakes for further assignment. It was very difficult for me to leave. I remember that our next door neighbors and very good friends (Mr. and Mrs. Hank Bowley) had come over to tell me good bye. When it came time to leave, I remember Mrs. Bowley holding out her hand to shake hands, but I could not. I had to turn away so they would not see me cry. It just would not have been "fittin" for a Big Strong Sailor to cry. I knew Mrs Bowley understood. The trip back to Great Lakes was very long and very lonely.

3 — BOOT CAMP

(IN RETROSPECT)

The 16 plus weeks that I spent at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station were a very important part of my life. The drilling, rifle training and boat rowing were not nearly as important as beginning to learn about (with difficulty) being away from home and on my own. Learning how to swim turned out to also be quite important. It seems to me that the Navy was not very good at showing people how to swim. I truly believe that I learned to swim on my own and in my own way.

In recent years, I have been able to visit with some shipmates that went through Great Lakes before and after I went through. It is interesting to note here, that they did not have the same (get thrown in the deep end) approach to learning how to swim. It was apparently an experiment that was used with our group. One guy told me that they were merely ask if they could swim. Then if they said yes, they were asked to swim the required distance and if they said no, they were started on the swim lesson routine.

This time was also important to me in that I gained greatly in self confidence. I learned that this particular kid, from a very small town in Iowa could do as well as anyone, when mixed in with kids from all parts of this big country of ours.

3 — BOOT CAMP

(AS HISTORY TELLS IT - June thru Oct 1940)

By the first of July 1940, Hitler had completed his conquest of France. Now Great Britain stood alone to try to carry on in Europe. Hitler asked for their surrender and started preparations for crossing the channel to invade the islands. Hitler recognized that he would need to have complete control of the air in order to successfully cross the channel. The months of August and September saw the beginning of the great air battles over England. In these battles, England was barely able to hold its own, but somehow it did. In the one week of August 17, 1940, Germany lost 260 planes and England lost 130. This was a lot of planes when you realize that our navy probably had only about 900 combat planes at that time.

4 — ABOARD THE YORKTOWN

(AS I REMEMBER)

Upon reporting back to the Training Station, I learned that my assignment was to be the U.S.S. YORKTOWN and that she was stationed at Pearl Harbor. I was at first disappointed in this assignment as I had always pictured myself on a Battle Wagon or some other ship with big guns as I had seen in the movies and in magazines. I went to the PX and got some post cards with a picture of the Yorktown on them and it was just not what I had expected as a fighting ship. I used the cards to write some notes to the folks at home. Also I thought that I would be really excited about going to the Islands. I found that I was not. I was terribly homesick and this overshadowed what should have been an exciting time.

About a week later, a large contingent of us were loaded on the North Shore Line to start the trip to San Diego. In Chicago we were transferred to a special train for the trip west. The train was all pullmans and only sailors were on board. It was a real nice trip. We ate in the dining cars and slept in the pullmans. Because it was a special train, it seemed that we spent more time on sidings than on the way. Also, because it was paid for by the Navy we apparently had to use as many different railroads as there were between Chicago and San Diego. I remember we used the Burlington, Union Pacific, Denver and Rio Grande (through the Royal Gorge) and the Sante Fe. There were probably others. With each change of railroads we got new engines and new crews. I remember going through Big Springs and would have liked to stopped off for a few hours. After we cleared Julesburg Colorado I was now heading farther west than

I had ever been before. It seems to me that it took four days to get from Chicago to San Diego. One of the places we were on a siding was near San Clemente, Calif. It was just after dark. In the quiet we could hear the ocean. One of the guys on our car, broke the rules to jump off and run down to the ocean and run back to report that the water was indeed salty. That evening we were taken off the train and then by bus to the Navy Station.

The next morning we were treated to our first sight of U.S. Navy war ships. They were bigger than I could imagine. Turned out these huge ships were destroyers as we were at the destroyer part of the base. We were told that we would be there about two weeks and would then travel on board destroyers to Pearl Harbor. In the meantime we could have Liberty in San Diego and would be put to work during the day on various duties on the base. My on-the-base assignment was to chip rust off of a destroyer dry dock. Like all good Boots, each must chip so much paint before the newer Boots can take over. There was no paint on this Dry Dock, only rust. So each day for two weeks, I spent my days scraping and wire brushing on a Dry Dock. Evenings were spent walking around San Diego and doing the town as much as a small town boot sailor could. I soon learned that the bars in San Diego served great Tom Collins and did not bother to check your ID to closely. I enjoyed being in San Diego and enjoyed the fact that the December weather was far different than home. There were different kinds of trees and all kinds of things for a curious kid to explore.

Also a part of being in town was window shopping. After several looks at some really nice looking watches in the window of one of the jewelry stores, I succumed to temptation and bought a Rose Gold Curvex Gruen Jeweled Wrist Watch. It cost $35 and I paid $10 down and signed a note to pay $5 each month until it was paid for. It was a beautiful watch and I was very proud of it. In order to get the credit I needed, I

was required to furnish my parents name and address.

One weekend, I applied for a 48-hour leave, and traveled by train up to Los Angeles to visit with my Aunt Billie (Dad's Sister). I was able to spend the week-end with her and her family (Her Husband and her Son Larry Montgomery). Larry was about my age so we hit it off real well and took time to ride a street car from their place on So. 120th Street to uptown L.A. We looked around and rode the street car home. Our highlight was a couple of "girls" that tried to pick us up. A memorable week-end for me.

Our two-week tour ended and we hoisted our gear on our shoulders and marched on board six destroyers that were headed for Pearl. On board we were shown where to hang our hammocks and told that we would be expected to perform some duties during the 6 days that we would be at sea. Our assignment -- what else -- chipping paint on the focsle. (short for forecastle -- the top deck forward of the forward mast). The work also included chipping paint in the paint locker which was located just below the focsle. Probably the worst place for a seasick sailor to be is near the bow of the ship as the bow has more of the up and down motion than any other part.

The first day out, the waters were very calm and even on a destroyer none of us had any sea sickness. From the second day on it got rougher and rougher and one by one we Boots each succumbed. Being seasick is a terrible experience when you have no way to get off. On the third day, the crew had to rig cables to hang on to as we went about the ship. As the ship would roll, ocean water would wash over the after decks. Eating was out of the question for us BOOTS. Needless to say we took quite a ribbing from the old crew. There were the usual stories such as if you feel something hairy in your throat don't spit it out, it is probably your a-- h---. I remember one of the regular crew telling another, "One of the funniest

things I have ever seen, is two Boots trying to heave in the same bucket at the same time."

About the fourth night out it also became quite foggy. In the fog, each ship towed a sled behind it. On the bow of the trailing ship a sailor with headphones kept the sled in sight and relayed information to the bridge on which way to steer and when to speed up or slow down. I was asked to perform this duty and as I stared into the fog to keep the sled in sight and relayed the information to the bridge, I suddenly realized that I was no longer seasick. Standing out in the fresh cool air with an important chore to perform, cured me at least for the time being.

On the sixth day we sighted the islands. As we got closer I was aware of a somewhat sweet odor. In checking with the older guys we found out that after being at sea for a few days, you could smell land. As we drew nearer we were treated to the unbelievable beauty of the red colored mountains and the lush green foliage of Oahu. I noticed also that as we approached the entrance to Pearl Harbor that the water changed from a deep blue to lighter blues and then to green as the clear ocean water became shallower.

In Pearl, we got our first glimpse of the Yorktown. Our first look was from the opposite side of a three story building. Above it towered the Island structure with the huge "Y" painted on it. She was too big to believe. Later that day we went aboard. We were given bunks in one of the Squadron's quarters. It was explained that when the ship was in port, the Air Squadron's crew moved ashore.

While we were in San Diego our working uniforms were dungarees and the liberty uniforms were dress blues. In Pearl, the working uniform for deck personnel was white shorts and "T" shirts with liberty uniforms of undress whites. The shorts and T shirt uniforms were quite comfortable in the tropical climate.

Our first breakfast on the YORKTOWN included large slices of fresh pineapple. It was so-oo good. I will always remember it.

During the next week we were given tours of this unbelievable ship and attended lectures about her. About the second day we saw an officer dressed in a tan uniform. He was quite noticable because all the shipboard officers wore white. We quickly learned that this was a pilot and that pilots were allowed to wear tan as wearing a white uniform in and out of airplanes was out of the question. I remember looking at this young man with great respect. Imagine, here was a real live Navy Flier. At the end of that week I learned that I was to be assigned to one of the Air Squadrons. The Torpedo Squadron. Once more, some of us hoisted our gear and hiked over to the Torpedo Squadron's barracks on Ford Island. I could hardly believe my luck. I was in the Navy in the Hawaiian Islands and now I was going to work with airplanes. Among the new guys, we talked about what we might like to do and I settled on wanting to be a radioman. My luck ran a little short when I learned that my record showed that I knew how to type and that they needed a new guy in the office. You have to know how to type to be a radioman but also to be a yeoman.

Even though I was somewhat disappointed with the assignment, I turned to and learned all I could about the duties in the Squadron Office. A part of learning these duties was to learn who all the officers were and what their duties were. Each Officer Pilot had assignments other than flying. Our Commander who had overall responsibility for the Squadron was Lt.Cmdr. W.V. Davis. He was our Skipper. The Executive Officer was Lt. Joe Taylor. Lt.(jg) E.B. Parker was third and was the Flight and Training Officer. Other officers were in charge of such things as Engineering (keep the planes repaired) Ordnance (in charge of bombs, torpedos, bombsights and how to use them). I

also remember Lt.(jg) Moore who was the Personnel Officer. He was responsible for the office and all the personnel records etc. While in the office this was the officer that we worked for. Each of the junior officers were assigned duties as assistants to the senior officers to begin to learn the ropes. Lt. Moore's assistant as Personnel Officer was Ensign Whyte.

Our squadron had 18 Torpedo Bombers that were designated as TBDs. The "T" and" B" for the Torpedo Bomber and the "D" for the manufacturer which was Douglas Aircraft. These planes were all metal low wing monoplanes that carried a crew of three. The crew of three consisted of a Pilot, Bombardier and Radioman/Tailgunner. The plane could be armed with either a torpedo or bombs which were mounted by hanging on bomb racks under the plane.

The Air Group had three other squadrons or four total. One of the other squadrons was a Fighter Squadron which had a small fabric covered two wing airplane designated as an F3F-3. The first "F" for fighter. The "3" for 3rd model and the second "F" for the manufacturer, Grumman. It was armed with two 30 calibre machine guns. The other two squadrons were a Scouting and Bombing Squadron. I believe they were both equipped at that time with a Scout Bomber called a SB2U. Scout Bomber built by Vought.

The fighter planes carried only the pilot while the scout bombers carried a crew of two, the Pilot and a Radioman/Tailgunner

Except for duty assignments including fire watches around the planes, we worked a 5 day week from 7 AM straight through to 1 PM and then had every afternoon off plus weekends. Each day there were training flights for the aircrews. At the first opportunity, I started hitching rides and was totally enthralled with flying. Flying over Pearl Harbor and the Island of

Oahu was quite an experience for an 18 year old kid from Iowa. I was, of course, only a passenger but it was a real thrill.

On Ford Island, very close to our barracks was a movie theatre with 5 cent movies each evening, a swimming pool, and a beer garden that was called the "Rag Roof" after its canvas covering. I spent many of my afternoons at the swimming pool, with a beer or two after. It was during this time that I really learned how to swim and found that I enjoyed it very much. Some weekends were spent going into Honolulu or on to Waikiki to see and enjoy the sights. On my 19th Birthday, January 18, 1941, a buddy and I went into Honolulu and hitched a ride up to the Pali and back, had a couple of drinks and returned to the base. This time was good duty but unfortunately was not to last very long.

On one of my several trips into town I hunted up a jewelry store that was part of the chain I had bought my watch from and paid the remainder of the amount owed. I did this because I recognized I would not always be able to mail a payment on the first of each month. Mail while at sea was not that often.

Several times during our stay at Pearl, we would load aboard the Yorktown and go for a shipboard training cruise. The first trip I was assigned to be the "Talker" in the Ready Room. Prior to take off when at sea, the Pilots reported to the Ready Room and put on some of their gear and got the information needed to carry out the mission. This information included, where the ship was, where it was headed, wind-speed direction, etc. This information was sent down from Air Plot via head phones to the Ready Room Talker and put on a black board. That was my Flight Quarters and General Quarters assignment.

One of the interesting things that I did was to get a map (chart) of the area and each day when the

longitude and latitude information came to the Ready Room I would make a plot. By connecting the plots with a line we could see where we were and where we had been. The first several trips out of Pearl were just south a short ways and then around in circles.

At every opportunity, I would slip up topside to watch the take-offs and landings. The Landings while at sea are each one an adventure. I never tired of watching them. Crewmen not required to be on the flight deck were forbidden to be topside, but I managed to find ways to do it.

On the April 20, 1941, we put to sea for what we thought was another training session. This time as I tracked the longitude and latitude from the Ready Room information, it became clear that we were headed East. The announcement was made that we were headed for the East Coast. The ship would be disguised as the Wasp to transit the Canal and would quietly join the Atlantic Fleet. From then on, our mail would be censored by the officers and we could not disclose our location.

4 — ABOARD THE YORKTOWN

(IN RETROSPECT)

The dry dock that we spent time scraping was for destroyers. It was a large metal framework that ran down tracks into the water and was then pulled up on shore with a destroyer in it. We were painting it so that it could be used to help in renovating the fifty old 4-stacker destroyers that were to be removed from mothballs and loaned to England.

I was at Pearl Harbor during December of 1940. It is easy to remember how the Sunday mornings were. It was a most beautiful, seemingly peaceful place and Sunday mornings were times to relax and do your own thing. It is easy for me to picture December 7, 1941, and how everyone there would not be able to believe and respond to the happenings. I am surprised that the forces there were able to fight back at all.

The airplanes we had in December of 1940 were totally obsolete by comparison to England, Germany, and Japan. To an 18-year old kid they were very impressive, but in comparison they were not much.

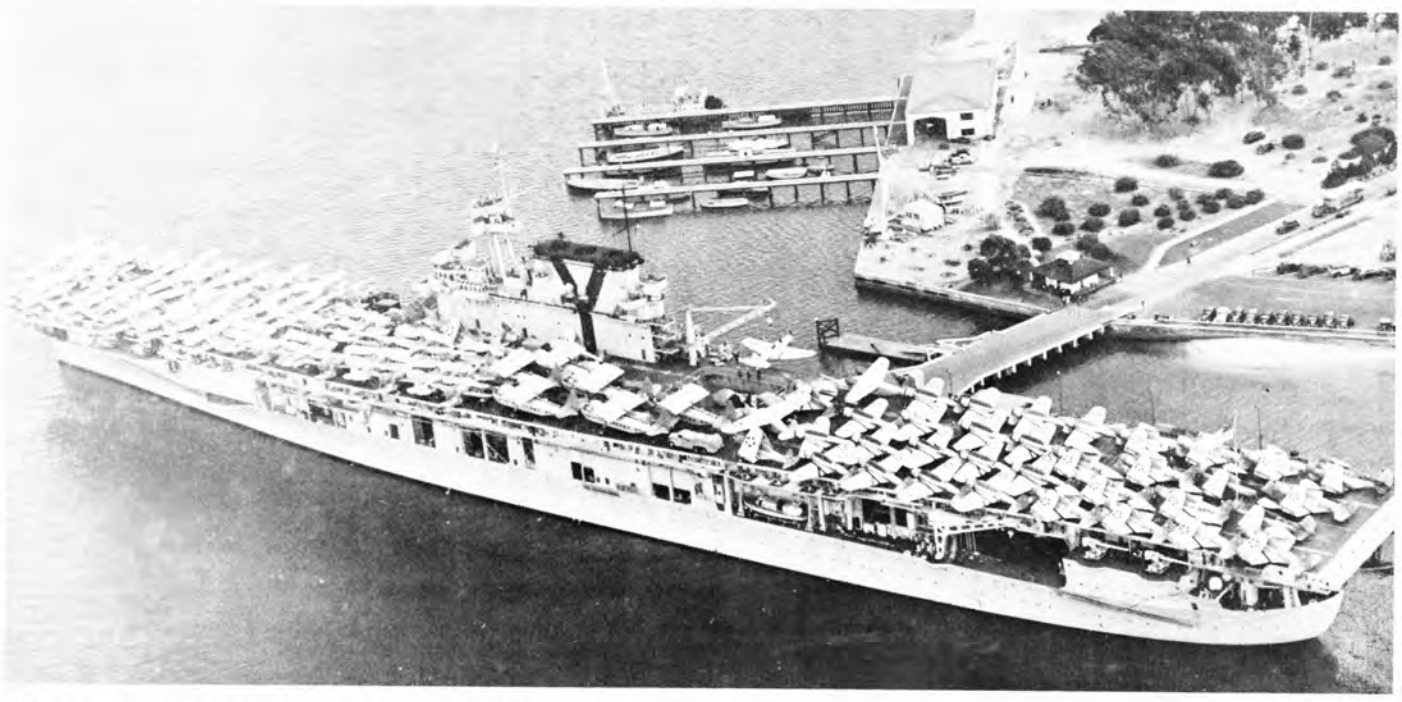
4 — ABOARD THE YORKTOWN

(HISTORY - Nov 1940 thru May 1941)

As I traveled to San Diego in November of 1940, the Re-election of President Roosevelt for a third term took place. Following the election, the program of Lend Lease with the United States providing arms of all kinds to England began in earnest. The Battle for Britain in the skies over England continued with Germany switching to night raids to reduce the losses in aircraft. With the advent of arms flowing across the Atlantic to England the Battle in the North Atlantic between the Convoys and the German U-Boats was to begin, and would continue for most of the War.

The increasing tempo and ferocity of the Battle of the Atlantic alarmed President Roosevelt and strengthed his resolve to be sure that England received the aid they so desperately needed. He therefore arranged for the Yorktown, three battleships, four light cruisers and two divisions of destroyers to be transferred from the Pacific to the Atlantic. This amounted to about one-fourth of the Pacific Fleet at that time.

The Yorktown was at sea conducting flight exercises when the orders were received to join the Atlantic Fleet.



THE U.S.S. YORKTOWN CV-5 - Photo was taken in 1938.
Planes parked on the aft part of the Flight Deck are TBD's

Photo is of a TBD-1. This is the type of plane we had in our Squadron when I first arrived aboard the Yorktown

5 — NEUTRALITY PATROLS

(AS I REMEMBER)

Our stay in Bermuda was for 3 weeks or so. With no Air Field there, the planes remained parked on the Flight Deck and there was not much to do. We left Bermuda and started for Norfolk, Va. On the way we conducted daily flight operations. One day as he was landing, Joe Taylor came in too low and hit the rear end of the Flight Deck. He and the Radioman got out, but the second seat man (I remember him as an enlisted pilot named Brooks) was killed. Joe Taylor was our Commander at that time as W. V. Davis had moved on to other duties. Lt. Taylor was injured in the crash and was first placed in the hospital aboard ship and later transferred to a hospital when we reached Norfolk. With Joe Taylor in the hospital, Lt(jg) E. B. Parker became our commander. Unusual for a (jg) to be saddled with that chore, but Mr. Parker in my mind was well qualified to fill in until Taylor could get back.

When we got to Norfolk, the Squadrons moved ashore to the air base. While we were there the Scouting and Bombing Squadrons got new SBDs to replace their fabric covered birds. Also the Fighter Squadron got the new F4F Fighter. It was a time for these squadrons to train in their new planes and practice simulated carrier landings. The Torpedo Squadron remained equipped with TBDs. I recall that the fighter pilots had considerable problems learning to fly the F4Fs. They were a much heavier, faster plane and the narrow landing gear gave them problems in landing. This new fighter was quite an improvement in speed and armament. The new plane fired four 50 caliber guns forward in place of two 30 caliber guns.

I continued to work in the office and continued to request a change to the Radio Group. I recall Lt. Moore asking me to change my mind and said that my work would more than qualify me for the rate of Yeoman 3rd class, if I would only take the test. I really wanted to be a Flying Radioman, so I persisted.

Norfolk was not a very good Liberty town. It was a long time Navy Town and there was a Recruit Naval Training Station there. The town was overrun with sailors and they quite often caused problems. We were not allowed to have civilian clothes on board ship or on the base. Some enterprising merchants helped us get around this problem by renting lockers that we could keep "civies" in. Even though a sailor in "civies" and navy shoes stood out like a sore thumb, I rented one of these lockers and got a pair of civie pants and a shirt. It was the thing to do.

My liberty buddy at this time was a kid named Sanderson. We also decided that if we were to be stationed here for a while, a car would be very handy to get out of the down town Norfolk area. So we teamed up and bought a car. It was a 1933 Chevy Coupe, which ran reasonably good. I learned to drive in that car but never bothered to get a driver's license. We had a lot of fun in that car and one time took a trip down into the hills of North Carolina. The car also helped in getting girls. Four in a coupe was crowded but we managed.

As soon as the pilots had learned how to handle the new planes we were loaded again aboard the Yorktown and set out to sea. For those of us on the Yorktown, the real war actually started in the Summer of 1941. Our assignment was to escort convoys across the Atlantic. We were to make several crossings, stopping short of England just outside the range of German Aircraft and turning the convoys over to English escorts. I remember the first time. We had escorted the convoy with the Carrier, the Battleship New

Mexico, cruisers and many destroyers and were met by only about six of the four stacker destroyers we had traded to England shortly before. Quite a contrast.

During our first trip, the Officers gave in and allowed me to transfer to the Radio Group. My at sea assignment was to be a Plane Handler. At sea all the younger sailors in addition to trying to learn skills as radiomen, mechs, ordnanceman etc., had to perform the duties of plane handlers. These duties included, cranking up the starters, untying the planes, and pulling the chocks prior to take off. It was somewhat dangerous work to clamber around the closely packed airplanes on the flight deck with the engines running, untying ropes and pulling chocks. I recall the CPO in charge telling us to stay scared. He said, "if you start to get used to this job and forget to be scared of those props, you'll get hit". On August 16, 1941 a plane handler named Gola was struck by a propellor. He was seriously injured but did survive. After the planes landed it was our chore to move them from the front of the Flight Deck and spot them on the back part and ready them for the next take-offs. We also had to cycle some down to the Hanger Deck and others up.

I did this chore for several months as we crossed and recrossed the Atlantic. As the weather grew cold we were issued heavy tight fitting special suits. We also got all our exposed skin severly chapped and were given soap sized bars of Camphor Ice to keep on our faces.

In the meantime I was supposed to begin learning how to be a radioman. There was no instructions of any kind given. I had a book to read, which I did, but that was about it.

On one of our trips back to the East Coast we put into Portland Maine. We were there for Thanksgiving. The people of Portland were really nice. For

Thanksgiving, many of them invited sailors for dinner. I and three others went to dinner with one of the families. It was fun and I enjoyed it very much.

One of our stops on this side of the Atlantic was in Newfoundland. After each of the long trips we were anxious for liberty. As we sat on the ship and looked at the shore, it looked real nice with trees and everything. We were allowed liberty, but only a few of us at a time. When my day came, we went ashore and found the beautiful trees were no taller that a man and nothing there except the beginnings of a Navy base. There was presumbably a town about four miles from the base so we headed toward it. This town was nothing more than a small settlement with a general store. No restaurants or bars. For dinner we bought some pork and beans and ate them out of the can, using crude wooden spoons formed from sticks using a pocket knife. We then walked back to the base. Not a very exciting Liberty, however, one that I remember. My liberty buddy this time was Jim Miller.

We were also fortunate enough to get back to Norfolk for short stays a few times where we would start up the car and have some fun.

Our trips across the Atlantic were on a full time war basis even though we were not at that time at war with Germany. The planes flew twice each day looking for submarines and each carried depth charges. On several occasions, the aircrews thought they saw subs, and depth charges were dropped from the planes and from Destroyers. We were at sea on October 31, 1941 when we received word that the U.S.S. Reuben James was sunk. The Reuben James was operating in a different convoy than the one we were with. 115 U.S. Sailors lost their lives.

On December 2, 1941 we returned to Norfolk and were told that the Yorktown would be placed in the Navy Yard for about 3 months for some badly needed repairs

and modernizing. So we in the aircrews moved ashore and planned on a several month stay. Sanderson had accepted a transfer to San Juan Puerto Rico so he had talked me into buying his half of the car. While we were at sea, we just parked it on the base and left it. On one of our previous stops in Norfolk I had met a girl named Beryl. We had several dates and seemed to enjoy each other. So this time I went over and started the car, called Beryl to see if she was still available and prepared for some good liberties. With Sanderson in Puerto Rico, I teamed up with a kid named Windham for Liberties.

We had a date set for the afternoon of December 7, 1941. I dressed in my dress blues and started to leave the base about noon. When I got to the gate I was turned around without any explanation and told that all personnel were restricted to base until further notice.

5 — NEUTRALITY PATROLS

(IN RETROSPECT)

For the Crew of the Yorktown the war really started during April 1941. We were at sea and operating under tight security. We could no longer use the transmitters in the planes except under extreme emergencies, we could not disclose what we were doing or where we were in letters back home. After many days at sea, we were not allowed liberty in Panama.

We were the chosen Carrier to carry out the most of the Neutrality Patrols steaming almost 18,000 miles in doing so. This far outdistanced the other two carriers in the Atlantic (the older Ranger and the new Wasp).

It has seemed to me all of my life, that the best, hardest working crew is looked to, to do the most. Somehow working hard is only rewarded by being assigned more work to do. This was certainly true of the Yorktown and her crew. During these times we spent at lot of time at sea, in some terrible weather and some of our in-port time was where liberties were quite restricted.

These so called Neutrality Patrols were in truth, convoy duty between the U.S. and England. They were conducted under full wartime conditions and U.S. forces and German forces shot at each other and a few times hit what they were shooting at.

5 — NEUTRALITY PATROLS

(HISTORY - June 1941 thru Dec 6, 1941)

By May 1941, Britain had pretty well assured itself that it could cope with the bombing of its cities. Germany was to continue sending bombers over England but it was apparent that the English could hold their own. Germany by now was beginning to bomb only at night with poor accuracy against the military targets. England did still face the threat of an invasion across the Channel and continued work to strengthen her forces for that possibility. The main thrust of the war thus was turned to the Atlantic as Germany attempted to cut off food, clothing and arms shipments from the West. The United States pitched in by escorting some convoys almost to England.

With the Atlantic Fleet operating in close proximity to (actually in) a war zone, incidents were bound to occur and U.S. warships were soon on the receiving end of submarine attacks. On September 4, the U.S.S. Greer was narrowly missed by two torpedoes. On October 18, the Kearny was hit and damaged by a torpedo with the loss of 11 men. On October 31, the U.S.S. Rueben James was sunk with 115 Americans lost.

During this time, the Yorktown and escorting ships detected several submarines and depth charges were dropped with unknown results.

Our providing convoy duty was an immense help to England. In April of 1941, over 180 ships were lost to U Boats. HEY! STOP READING FOR A MOMENT -- Take time to consider that England lost 180 ships and crews in one month. Our doing convoy duty was a must.

England had to keep her big ships close to home as Germany still had a strong Navy. The merchant ships were on their own and were easy prey. In May the Bismarck was caught and sunk. This action relieved this pressure some. With our help, the number of ships lost to U Boats dropped from 180 in April to less than 50 during each of the Months of July, August, October and November, with losses in September of 80. Fifty ships lost a month was a terrible problem but a great improvement over 180.

6 — THE WAR STARTS

(AS I REMEMBER)

After being turned back at the gate, I returned to my barracks and there found out about the attack on Pearl Harbor. Calls were sent out for all the guys that were on liberty to return to base, and we made immediate plans to load back aboard the Yorktown. I do not recall being surprised that the Japanese had attacked but I do recall being quite upset over our planned three month overhaul being terminated. There was a period of several days of confusion as the Brass tried to decide the best course of events for the Yorktown. Our orders seemed to change hourly from move aboard to stay ashore for now. After some starts and stops it was decided that the Yorktown would enter the Navy Yard and undergo an accelerated, abbreviated refit. The main work performed was the removal of the antiquated machine guns from the gun galleries along the flight deck and the installation of new Oerlikon 20 mm guns.

On the December 16, 1941 we put to sea and headed for the Panama Canal. We had passengers in the form of shipyard workers that came along to complete the installation of the new guns. We went through the Canal on December 21, 1941. This time through, about 25% of us got a 4 hour liberty. I was either one of the lucky ones as I got to go, or perhaps unlucky as a 4 hour liberty in Panama can only tend to get you in trouble. I escaped the trouble, but did not see much of the place.

After clearing the Canal we turned north toward San Diego, celebrated Christmas in the Pacific and put in there on December 30 for a 6-day stay. At the end of our short stay, we again headed out into the Pacific as part of a convoy taking the 2nd Marine Brigade to

reinforce Samoa. We did not put into port at Samoa but did get close enough to see the island from a distance.

From Samoa we turned North and on February 1, 1942 conducted the first offensive action of the war for the U.S. Planes from the Yorktown were to attack the Island of Jaluit in the Gilbert Island Group while Enterprise planes attacked Makin and Mili. Our planes took off in very poor weather and at about the maximum possible range.

While the planes were gone, we had some excitement on the ship. A "Mavis" Flying Boat was sighted and 2 fighters caught up with it and were able to shoot it down in full sight of the ship. As usual while the planes were gone I was up on the flight deck. Over the P.A. system we were made aware of the enemy plane. The sky was cloudy so we could not see it. Soon though, off the port bow we could see the flaming wreckage come down through the clouds. Those of us on deck cheered as we saw it. For a moment, war was fun and we cheered as about 10 Japanese airmen plunged to their deaths. The plane was shot down by Ensigns McCuskey and Adams and was the first enemy plane downed by the Yorktown.

Of the eleven of VT-5 TBDs that took-off on the mission, only eight returned. The loss of three TBDs and crews was tough to take. My Norfolk Liberty Buddy "Windham" and our Personnel Officer Lt. Moore were among the men that did not return. Suddenly the War was real and there was nothing fun about it.

Continuing bad weather caused the Admiral to cancel a planned 2nd attack and we pulled back and headed for Pearl.

We entered Pearl Harbor on February 6, 1942. As we entered the Harbor the beautiful green water I had expected was still covered with oil from the sunken

ships. The effects of the attack of December 7, dominated the view of the harbor. The Sunken Battleships still sat on the bottom with their decks and superstructures low in the water. The worst hit was the U.S.S. Arizona. Her decks were awash and her superstructure was canted at an angle. It was a very sobering view for us as we steamed by.

In a pattern that seemed to fit our ship, we were to be in Pearl for only ten days and on February 16, 1942 we set sail again, this time for the South Pacific, where we were to join forces with the U.S.S. Lexington to try to prevent the Japanese from expanding their holdings too far in that direction. As we were cruising toward the Coral Sea, the Japanese were continuing their expansion and were landing on the North East Shores of New Guinea. This was getting very close to Australia. The Brass decided that our planes should attack the newly arrived Japanese forces at Lae and Salamaua in New Guinea.

Our squadron flew on the mission with 12 TBDs and all 12 returned. We were all thankful. The damage report indicated that it was a good days work.

The Yorktown was to remain in the Coral Sea for some time. The Lexington returned to Pearl for some work. After being continuously at sea since February 16, we did put into port in the Island of Tongatabu on April 20, 1942.

Again the island was not able to handle the whole crew at once so we were allowed Liberty on a very limited basis. I did get ashore one time. Tongatabu was a delightful island not to different from the scenes of South Sea Island Movies. The people were quite friendly. Two other guys and I decided to walk out into the countryside rather than stick in Nukualofa. We had a nice hike and in one village the women entertained us by singing and clapping their hands while about five of the younger girls danced. I was

surprised that they did not have any instruments but later we learned that in Tonga, that is the way the music is made. Singing and hand clapping. We also ate the native fare of bananas with green coconut milk to drink. We were to also learn the next day that that combination will clean out a persons system.

It was a really nice liberty and I enjoyed it very much.

Seven days later on April 27, 1942 we were back at sea headed back to the Coral Sea.

Some time during our stay in the Coral Sea, I began flying as a radioman. My assigned crew included an enlisted pilot named Goodwin and a second seat man named Richner. While at sea, the Yorktown would launch a search mission at daybreak to search as far as the planes could, to see if any enemy ships had slipped in during the night. Then in the late afternoon a 2nd mission, returning to the ship just before dark. This was a daily routine. This routine required two crews for each plane as two flights a day every day was too much. So we had a first string crew with mostly senior officers as pilots and a second string with junior officers and some enlisted pilots. Our TBDs being old and not as sound mechanically as the other planes were relagated the job of Anti-Submarine Patrol. We would take-off and take station just outside the escorting destroyers and fly circles looking for enemy subs. So once each day (morning one day, evening the next) we would take-off and look for submarines for 4 hours and then land again.

Take-offs and landings were always exciting. After being at sea, for as long as we had, and with daily flight operations, the landings became routine. Many times as I watched, the entire air-group would get aboard without one wave off.

6 - THE WAR STARTS (AS I REMEMBER)

In the TBDs our flight gear consisted of our dungarees with a Mae West inflatable life jacket, and a tight fitting helmet with earphones and goggles. After getting in the third seat, a seat type parachute was buckled on. Take-off and landings were made with the "green house" canopys open and with goggles down. From the third seat, I enjoyed the take-offs. We would go roaring down the deck and fly off the bow. Then from the rear seat it seemed as if the Yorktown and the whole world tipped toward the left and the ships in the Task Force grew smaller and smaller until they appeared as toys on the dark blue ocean. We would then cruise around for 4 hours trying to concentrate on the water directly below, keeping a watchful eye out for signs of subs. I never sighted one but I did a lot of looking. The landings were always exciting. As we started back for the Yorktown, we would fall into a single line with miles between each plane and fly a large circle close to the water. A destroyer was always placed a fixed distance behind the carrier to be used as a guide for the planes to make their final turn toward the landing. The plane then would straighten out, try to fly about 15 to 20 feet higher than the flight deck until directly aft of the fan tail, then under the directions of the Landing Signal Officer dip down to the flight deck and catch the arresting gear. It was always a good idea to brace yourself when the arresting gear grabbed hold. It was quite a jerk.

In early May the Lexington arrived back in the Coral Sea and at the same time it was learned that the Japanese were landing forces at Tulagi Harbor, a stones throw from Guadalcanal.

On May 4, 1942, the Planes from Yorktown and Lexington attacked the Japanese Forces at Tulagi. Our Squadron flew 13 TBDs on two different attacks with the loss of one. The lost crew was Lt. Ewoldt and Radioman Machalinski.

6 — THE WAR STARTS

(IN RETROSPECT)

None of us were surprised that we were suddenly involved in the War. We were surprised in how it came about. For the crew of the Yorktown, it came at a very bad time. The ship was in need of work. It is a miracle and a tribute to the Engineering Gang that we were able to perform as well as we did.

The Marshall Islands raid did nothing to change the war. Very little damage was done. The raids had two good effects. First it did provide a small amount of good news to the folks at home and demonstrated that we did still have a Navy in the Pacific. Second, it was an excellent training mission for the crews, from the Admirals down to the Seamen. The Enterprise needed it more than the Yorktown as we had been operating on a wartime basis for sometime.

The raids on Salamaua and Lae were more important and again provided good training.

The Talagi raids were even more important and were really a message to the Japanese that we were ready to take a shot at stopping their expansion.

I understand that my Norfolk Liberty Buddy, Windham, was captured along with the crew of his plane and survived the War as POW in Japan. Lt. Moore and his crew, were last seen ditching their plane and climbing in their life raft. They were never heard from again. I have wondered many times. How long did they live? How did they die?

6 — THE WAR STARTS

(HISTORY Dec 7, 1941 thru May 4, 1942)

During this time, the War was brought to the U.S. with the sudden attack on Pearl Harbor. The Japanese had planned well and were able to quickly seize Wake Island, Singapore, the Philippines, and much of Southeast Asia. The U.S. spent this time recognizing that a big job lay ahead and in getting organized. The first job at hand was to slow down and then stop the Japanese expansion.

A few hit and run raids were carried out to be used as training exercises, and to let the Japanese know that they had the U.S. Navy to deal with. These raids included the Marshall Islands, Salamaua and Lae, Tulagi and of course, Dolittle's raid on Tokyo.

In early May, the Japanese poised to continue their thrust to the south and to try to interrupt the shipping lanes between the U.S. and Australia.

7 — THE CORAL SEA

(AS I REMEMBER)

On May 5, 1942 we retired to the south of the Solomon Islands and again took on fuel from the Tanker Neosha. Chief Radioman Nobbs, with his stateside orders in hand transferred to the Neosha for transportation back to Pearl. When Nobbs' orders first arrived and he knew that he was enroute to the relative safety of Blimp Duty in the States, asked to be relieved of flying duties. For this reason he did not fly with Joe Taylor on the Tulagi raids. It would have turned out alright as Taylor got back safely from both missions.

As May 7th dawned, we went to General Quarters as usual prior to sun up. We knew that Japanese forces were nearby and it was obvious that the Japanese were very much aware that American Carriers were in the area. The raids on Tulagi certainly announced our presence. I remember that everyone onboard seemed tense as we launched the morning search mission. The search located one enemy carrier. All the known information was sent down to the Ready Room and passed on to the Air Crews. About 9:00 AM, we got the order "PILOTS MAN YOUR PLANES", and the Yorktown and Lexington launched an attack on this carrier. The Carrier was identified as the smaller carrier Shoho. Our squadron launched 10 planes and all 10 returned safely. The returning crews reported it was no match and they had sunk the Shoho in a matter of a few minutes. Our planes were back on board by 1:00 PM and we spent the afternoon expecting to be attacked or expecting to fly a second strike against other ships.

At this time I was alternating between flying as a second stringer and working the Ready Room as a Talker (when not flying). That evening I was in the ready

room as we were landing the afternoon scouts. It was almost dark and suddenly I heard the 20mm guns firing. Then they ceased and suddenly they were firing again. Over the phones and later we were to find out that as our planes came around to land, Japanese planes were in the landing pattern. Our antiaircraft fire apparently drove them off. One of our own fighters was mistaken for enemy and was hit rather badly but managed to get aboard safely. A scary confused evening. I later took a look at the damaged fighter. The instrument panel was hit several times.

The next day, May 8, I was the Ready Room Talker as the early search located two enemy carriers and by 9:00 AM we launched planes to attack them. Our squadron launched 9 planes. At 11:00 AM the word was passed that enemy planes were approaching. By now I was very much aware of what dive bombers and torpedo planes could do to a ship. I had seen the tangled, twisted mess they had made out of the U.S.S. Arizona and other ships in Pearl Harbor and had the very fresh memory of the Japanese Carrier Shoho being set on fire and sunk in minutes. I remember looking up at the the wood planks of the Flight Deck that formed the overhead of the Ready Room and thinking. "That is the middle of the Flight Deck. I am sitting under the one thing that the enemy planes are aiming at and they are on their way". As I sat there, a fear nothing like I had ever experienced, gripped me. Scared almost to death I waited. Soon I could hear the 5 inch AA guns begin firing. I had heard them many times during practice. They sounded much different this time. Then the 1.1 inch guns opened up followed by the 20 mm guns as the enemy planes came closer. Then the ship listed first one way then the other as we made high speed turns. Then the whole ship was rocked by a series of six orseven bomb explosions. It is not possible to describe the sound and feelings of bomb explosions near by. Then on the phones, the Talker in Ready Room #3 reported "A bomb just went through here". Then it was quiet.

I went topside and sure enough there was a clean hole in the flight deck right over Ready Room #3 where an armour piercing bomb had entered. Men were at work patching it. Down on the Hangar Deck the damage from this bomb was much more apparent. It had exploded four decks below the hangar deck and had caused considerable damage. The center of the ship was open from the Hangar deck down four decks. I will always remember the stench that permeated the area. I do not know what it was from. A combination of explosive, burning paint, burnt sailors, etc. It was weeks before it began to clear away.

Soon our planes returned from their morning attack and it was time to land them. All nine planes from our squadron returned safely.

Back topside, the Lexington was steaming along but trailing smoke. As the afternoon rolled by she seemed to be smoking more and more, with a noticeable list. Later that evening she was abandoned. We landed her remaining planes on the Yorktown.

The next day it was obvious that we were headed south away from the Coral Sea. We were back to the usual morning and evening search missions. We sailed far enough south that we encountered cool weather. Then we turned east and on May 17th put into Tongatabu. Divers were put over the side to see what the six near misses had done to the ship.

While we were in Tongatabu, Lt Ewoldt and Machalinski rejoined us. They had landed in the water near Guadalcanal during the raid on Tulagi, May 4, 1942. They told of how they had drifted to shore on Guadalcanal and how they had sailed a small boat to the island of Efate. They also told of a Japanese destroyer that spotted them while they were in the rubber boat and for some unknown reason chose to leave them. We wondered why the Japanese would do that.

On May 20th we left Tongatabu and headed for Pearl. During this time we "Celebrated" being at sea without replenishment for 100 days with a smoker program on the Hangar Deck. Our meals by this time were getting down to almost nothing. We had a lot of rice and bread made with out the yeast that would allow it to rise. As a part of the "Celebration" we had a raffle with six winners getting to eat the last six steaks onboard. As a part of the program the six steaks were paraded up and down the flight deck under guard by armed marines.

We arrived back in Pearl on May 27th.

7 - THE CORAL SEA

(IN RETROSPECT AND HISTORY)
(May 5 thru 30, 1942)

On May the 5th, Japanese soldiers stormed Corregidor and for all practical purposes the Philippines were theirs. It was their next goal to occupy Port Moresby near Australia and cut the supply lines between there and the U.S. They had three carriers, numerous other fighting ships and Troop Transports headed south. It had been the Yorktown's job for several months to sit in the Coral Sea and oppose that move. Fortunately it took place late enough that the Lexington had time to join us. The Battle of the Coral Sea was essentially a two day engagement.

The first day (May 7, 1942) our search planes found the Shoho and overwhelmed it with more than 90 aircraft that caught her in clear weather. She went down in about 20 minutes after undergoing about a dozen bomb hits and perhaps five torpedoes. All of her aircraft were lost and 800 men died with the sinking.

This same day, the other two Japanese carriers (Shokaku and Zuikaku) found the tanker Neosha and mistaking her for a carrier, attacked her with about 70 aircraft, hitting her with seven bombs. The escorting destroyer U. S. S. Simms was sunk with three bombs.

One of the Ironies of War. Chief Nobbs transferred to the apparent safety of the Neosha instead of flying with Joe Taylor on two missions against enemy carriers. Taylor and his new Radioman "Jones" got back safely and Chief Nobbs was killed in the sinking of the Neosha.

The Japanese attack on the Neosha was one of the keys to the battle, in that they expended their efforts against a secondary target and left the Yorktown and Lexington unscathed the first day of the Battle. A lot of their planes and crews were lost that day due to mishaps and during their attempt to attack the Yorktown in the evening.

The Japanese did launch an evening attack against the Yorktown and Lexington but they were picked up on Radar and our Fighters were able to shoot down eight of them and in the then stormy weather they were unable to find the Yorktown. The Japanese planes that showed up in the landing pattern after dark were apparently lost and had followed our planes in, thinking they were Japanese. None of the planes in the Landing Pattern fired at the ships. It is one of those mysteries of War that has never been totally cleared up.

The second day (May 8, 1942) Our search planes found the Shokaku and Zuikaku and the Japanese found us. Both sides launched about 80 aircraft at about the same time. The two fleets of aircraft passed each other and were seen by each other. This day found the Zuikaku under cover of bad weather and she was not attacked. The Shokaku was seen through the clouds and was hit by two bombs. The weather caused the windshields and bombsights to fog up and destroyed the pilots ability to see anything. Yorktown planes dropped 23 bombs and 12 torpedoes. Of the two bomb hits, one was by Jo Jo Powers who was hit and burning as he entered his dive and knowing this he deliberately went in very low to assure a hit and crashed during his pull out. A very poor score considering it was the same crew that overwhelmed the Shoho the day before. The two bomb hits caused considerable damage to the Shokaku and she was out of the war for some time.

At the other end of the battle, the Japanese managed to hit the Lexington with four bombs and two torpedoes. The Yorktown was hit by one bomb and was damaged by several near misses. The near misses opened the fuel tanks and damaged the Radar Antenna. Captain Buckmaster had performed a remarkable feat of steering the Yorktown between two torpedoes and causing several others to miss. The Lexington's damage was such that gasoline vapors kept leaking out into compartments and then exploding, until the entire ship became a blazing inferno. When it became obvious that the fires could not be controlled, the crew abandoned ship and she was sunk rather than be a flaming beacon in the night.

WHO WON THE BATTLE --

The Japanese lost a small carrier (Shoho) and suffered damage to the Shokaku. We lost the big carrier Lexington and suffered damage to the Yorktown. Each side lost a destroyer and the U.S. lost the Tanker Neosha. In terms of ships, the Japanese won.

In terms of Aircraft, the U.S. lost 66 planes but got many of the air crews back. The Japanese lost 77 planes and most of the air crews. The U.S. had most of its air crews intact because they got a lot of aircraft back that were badly damaged. The Japanese lost essentially all their planes and more importantly the veteran crews that were with them. The self sealing gas tanks that our dive bombers and fighters had were really paying off.

The U.S. lost about 550 men, The Japanese 1074.

The battle was fought to stop the Japanese from invading Port Moresby. This was accomplished. From this standpoint. We were the winners.

Our Squadron (VT-5) lost no planes and all of the air crewmen returned safely.

7 - CORAL SEA (IN RETROSPECT AND HISTORY)

Most important of all, the Japanese had three carriers knocked out of the war for several very important months. Shoho sunk, Shokaku damaged and Zuikaku stripped of planes and air crews.

8 — MIDWAY

(AS I REMEMBER)

On May 27th as we neared Pearl Harbor, the First String Aircrews flew off for Ford Island. Surely now I thought, we would be going back to the states to get repaired and get new planes. We only had nine planes instead of eighteen and they were obsolete and totally worn out with some, badly damaged. The Yorktown was trailing oil out of its damaged tanks and the whole center of the ship was open from the bomb hit. It seemed we were finally in for some well deserved stateside duty. It was interesting news then to find out that the ground crews for the squadron that normally moved ashore as soon as we hit port, were to remain onboard while the ship was put into dry dock for repairs. This did not make sense. There was a lot of scuttlebut but nothing seemed to make sense. Those of us of the Squadrons that remained aboard had no airplanes to take care of so we were put to work doing other things. The cranes that normally hauled provisions on board were in use constantly for the repair activities. We were totally out of provisions so many of us were put to work man-handling food and clothing on board and down to the store rooms. I spent the better part of two days in a human chain, handing canned goods aboard.

On May 28th, the Enterprise and Hornet steamed out of Pearl. It seemed to us as we watched them depart that it was now their turn and we would shortly be on our way home. On May 29th, the dry dock was flooded and we too steamed out of Pearl. Shortly after leaving the harbor, Captain Buckmaster in an unusual move, picked up the microphone and addressed the crew over the P.A. system. He told us that he knew we were expecting to head for the states but we were not yet going to be able to do that. He said that we had some

more urgent business to attend to but promised that when it was concluded we would head for home.

Shortly after Captain Buckmaster's speech I heard the familiar sound of planes approaching. I went topside to watch the landings. I assumed these would be our old crews. I had wondered who was taking care of the planes. They shortly peeled off and entered the landing circle as the Yorktown swung into the wind and picked up speed. The first to land as usual were the fighters. The first ones around took wave offs. Strange, our crews could land the whole group, day after day without a wave off. Then a couple successfully got on board. The third plane in, missed the arresting cable cleared the barrier and crashed into one of the first planes. When this was partially cleared. The planes continued to come in and land. They were getting about two wave offs for each landing. Another fighter came in and drifted to the right. He pulled up and barely cleared the smoke stack. It was clear that these boys were new or were out of practice. It took a long time to get them all down but eventually they did.

We later learned that the Torpedo Squadron and others were from the U.S.S. Saratoga. The Sara was in Bremerton, Washington getting repaired from a sub attack and the aircrews had been on shore for some time. It was a mixed crew that came aboard. Our Squadron was reorganized as Torpedo Squadron Three using the Air Crews of VT-3 and the ground crews of VT-5. VB-5 aircrews came back aboard as VS-3 and VB-3 aircrews from the Saratoga formed the Bombing Squadron. For Fighters we got VF-42 back in new planes reorganized as VF-3 but this time with 27 planes instead of 18. Obviously there were some replacement pilots and some added.

We didn't wait for orders, each one of us pitched in to do our usual duties. I was slightly confused as my 2nd string pilot (Goodwin) had gone ashore with the

planes. Only the first string crews from VT-3 came aboard. I therefore assumed that I wouldn't be flying this trip so I assumed the duties of Ready Room Talker. If more than this was expected I was sure that I would find out about it in due time.

On June 2nd we caught up with the Enterprise and Hornet. They and their escorts were operating as a team and the Yorktown and escorts as a second team. Although we caught up with them they were generally just over the horizon.

On June 3rd we flew the usual search missions but nothing was found.

On June 4th the usual search flight was launched at about 4:30 AM. Information that we had, indicated that this was the day we would find the enemy. The Ready Room was standing room only as the aircrews waited for the word that the enemy had been located. This group of guys had only been on board a few days and to me they were all strangers. I had begun to learn the names of the top officers only. The word finally came about 8:00 AM. As the word was passed, I remember hearing one of the Air Crewmen say "Oh Boy, Action At Last". I remember thinking, he is new. He will change his attitude after he has seen some.

After the planes left, the Ready Room was still partially full. Some of the conversations led me to understand that the second seat men that did not fly when the planes carried torpedoes had decided to stay in the Ready Room. When the planes were gone there was no reason for me to stay there. I thought quite a bit about where on the ship would be the best place to be during an attack. I had talked briefly about this to a couple of the other guys that also did not have a specific assigned place while the planes were gone. Where would be the safest. After much thought I decided the Ready Room was as good as any, even though it was right under the imaginary bulls eye that the

Japs would be aiming for. They hadn't hit it yet. Maybe they would miss again.

At about 11:00 AM the word was passed that enemy planes were approaching. As in the Coral Sea, I looked again at the overhead as the ship picked up speed and listed first to one side then the other, and found myself every bit as much in fear as before. Then the 5 inch guns began firing followed by the 1.1 inch guns and the 20 mm guns. Then again the tremendous explosions of the bombs. Then a smaller explosion and a corner of the Ready Room began to smoke and a hole appeared. There did not seem to be any fire. Then silence and I was aware that the ship had stopped moving.

I left the Ready Room and went topside. I could see a lot of activity toward the aft part of the superstructure. I walked back that way and saw that a bomb had struck and exploded on the flight deck just aft of the Island toward the center of the ship. Men were already at work patching the hole. The 1.1 inch gun that sat at the very aft end of the Island had a ring of armour plate about 4 feet high surrounding it. It was punctured in a thousand places. The Pointer and Aimer of these guns sat in seats that moved with the gun as it was aimed. The bottom part of these two men were still sitting in the seats. From the waist up they were gone. The armour plate shielded them only up to their waists from the bomb explosion. Many injured were being attended to by Pharmacist Mates and the dead were being gathered. I didn't see anything in particular that I could do. I walked back forward toward the Ready Room. Two other bombs had hit the Yorktown. One down the stack and blew out the fires in the boilers stopping the ship, and one near the bow. The Cruiser Portland came near the bow and work was started to rig a tow line. Before this could be completed, the ship began to move and was shortly back up to a reasonable speed.

In the meantime, the Yorktown planes had returned and were sent on to the Enterprise and Hornet. While on the Flight Deck, it seemed to me that the Enterprise and Hornet were just enough to the east of us as to be out of sight of the incoming enemy planes. They had not been attacked.

Almost unbelievably, the Yorktown was able to resume flight operations. At about 2:30 PM the word was passed again that enemy planes were approaching. All the fighters we had on board were launched. I went again to the Ready Room which was still partially filled with second seaters. At this time I remembered that the door leading forward opened into the Captains Dining Room and that it had a large heavy table in it. I opened this door and finding the large room empty, I told my brood to go to that room and lay down under the tables. So this we did. Once again the pattern of the 5 inch guns firing followed by the 1.1 inchers and the 20mm guns. I raised my head and watched through an open door that opened out onto the port catwalk and glimpsed the enemy torpedo planes approaching through an incredible amount of exploding shells. Then the deck I was laying on smacked me in the ribs along with a terrible explosion followed by a second smack and explosion. The ship immediately listed far to the port and you had to wonder if it was going over. Several of the men in the room jumped up and started for the doors. I shouted to them to get back down and they did. Then it was quiet and the ship was still and dark. I went again topside and found the list to port so great that walking on the flight deck was very difficult. There was no movement of the ship and there were no lights or sound system. I just wandered about and wondered if she was going over. I noticed again that Enterprise and Hornet were over the horizon and not touched.

About 3:00 PM the word was passed to abandon ship. I was wearing my flying life preserver (Mae West) so I worked my way down to the starboard side of the Focsle

where some lines with knots tied every few feet had been thrown over the side. There were quite a few sailors there and had formed an orderly line. As each one of us came near a line, we removed our shoes and strangely, lined them up neatly near a bulkhead, then one by one lowered ourselves down the line and into the oil covered water. When I reached the water I was careful not to go under because to do so would have covered my face with oil. I inflated my Mae West and started swimming toward the nearest Destroyer. The oil became almost tar like as it floated on the salt water. It was difficult to swim in but I just kept stroking. As I was swimming along, a sailor came swimming by without a life vest. He asked if he could hold on for a minute to catch his breath. I asked him where his life vest was and he said he discarded it as he could make better time without it. He was right of course, but I decided to keep mine. I would guess that I was in the water over one hour before I finally reached the side of the destroyer and climbed aboard.

I remember looking at my Gruen Rose Gold watch and seeing a bubble in the salt water that was under the crystal. I took it off and dropped it over the side. We were a mess of oil covered guys that crawled aboard the destroyers. The guys on the destroyers were overwhelmed with several hundred survivors each. The total crew on a destroyer is about 100. Here now were perhaps five times that many tarry souls. There was nothing they could do to clean us up or find us a place to sleep. We just stayed in our wet oily clothes and lay down where ever we could so as to be out of the way as much as possible.

The next day we were transferred to the Cruiser Portland and again we laid where ever we could. I remember that we each knew some of the men who had been killed, but we seemed to be in good spirits. I remember wondering about this at that time. I guess we were just happy that we were alive and headed back to Pearl.

Two days later we were again transferred to a bigger ship. This time it was the submarine tender U.S.S. Fulton. Two more days and we were back in Pearl. We were taken to a Marine Training Station and placed in barracks there while the Navy sorted us all out, gave us replacement uniforms and arranged for our next assignments.

8 — MIDWAY

(IN RETROSPECT AND HISTORY)
(June, 1942)

It is now amazing to me to look back at my miniscule role in probably the greatest most important Sea Battle in all of History and realize how little I knew of what was happening around me. I also recognize that most of the participants were in the same boat "so to speak". I did not know what really happened during that time until after the war was ended and the history books began to record it.

A number of really good books have been written detailing the events of that day. It is not possible for me to add much to what is already well recorded. I would recommend three books in particular.

INCREDIBLE VICTORY by Walter Lord

MIRACLE AT MIDWAY by Gordon W. Prange

THAT GALLANT SHIP U.S.S YORKTOWN (CV-5) by Robert Cressman

I would however like to add the following as I believe strongly in this and I have never seen anything in print to substantiate it.

During the two air attacks, the Yorktown was positioned between the enemy and the Enterprise and Hornet. Incoming planes would see Yorktown first and attack her. History has recorded that the few Japanese Pilots that got home reported that the Yorktown was on fire and dead in the water. The second attack by the Japanese found an intact carrier steaming and launching planes. The Japanese thought they were attacking a second carrier. The Yorktown,

damaged in the Coral Sea was perhaps offered as a target to help protect the other two carriers. If this was true it was a good move. (Unless you were on the Yorktown)

I was not to learn until after the war, that out of the 12 pilots and 12 radiomen that I had only begun to get acquainted with, and to whom I passed the information about the enemy location, and the orders to "MAN YOUR PLANES", only two pilots and one radioman would survive the day. Those who survived were: Pilots Wilhelm Esders and Harry Corl. The surviving but wounded radioman was with Corl. His name was Lloyd Fred Childers. Esders and Childers survived the War. Corl was killed 10 weeks later on August 24, 1942. After the war interviews with men who served aboard Japanese Destroyers, revealed that Ensign Wesley F. Osmus, survived being shot down but was executed later in the day after being picked up by the Japanese.

The other two Torpedo Squadrons were also wiped out that day. VT-8 from Hornet and VT-6 from Enterprise. From VT-8, only one pilot Ensign Gay was to survive and from VT-6, three planes got back to the Enterprise and one other crew survived after spending 17 days in their rubber boat. VT-8 also had six of the new TBF planes that were flown to Midway at the last minute. They did not make out any better than the TBDs, as all six were destroyed with only one getting back to Midway for a crash landing.

One of the keys to the victory that day was the fact that the Torpedo Squadrons were to find the enemy first and were to cause the enemy carriers to spend valuable time taking evasive actions and to use up their protective fighter cover destroying these torpedo planes. This allowed the dive bombers to dive almost unopposed.

It is totally ironic to now realize that The Torpedo Squadrons flew in without a chance and were carrying torpedoes that would either run deep and go under the targets or would probably not explode even if they hit their target. One submarine (U.S.S. Nautilus) was able to get in range and fire torpedoes. They thought they hit at least one damaged carrier. Japanese reports after the war confirmed that the torpedoes did not explode and actually a few Japanese used one as a life raft after its malfunctioning war head broke off as it hit the ship.

Once again our Radio Communications were very poor. In looking back I cannot understand why the Admirals did not realize this and try to do something about it.

My ship, the U.S.S. Yorktown (CV-5) was gone. Even though I was at the very first, disappointed that I was assigned to her, to my dying day I will be proud of the fact that for 18 months, I was a member of the Crew of the U.S.S. Yorktown. We were, without any doubt, the hardest working crew in the Navy. We worked hard at the Neutrality Patrols while the other Carriers were stateside. We were primarily responsible for stopping the Japanese advance toward Australia. We had a big part in stopping the Japanese advance to the west at Midway. We participated in the sinking of five Japanese Carriers. We did more than our share. Our time at sea between May of 1941 and June 4, 1942, was two to three times as much as any other carrier.

The importance of the Battle of the Coral Sea is now apparent in that the Japanese went to Midway with only four carriers. They had planned on seven. The Shoho was sunk, the Shokaku was not operational due to damage and lack of planes and the Zuikaku was without planes. As it was, we had three carriers to their four. Without Coral Sea it would have been their seven against our four. Very poor odds (assumes the Lexington would also have been there).

WHO WON

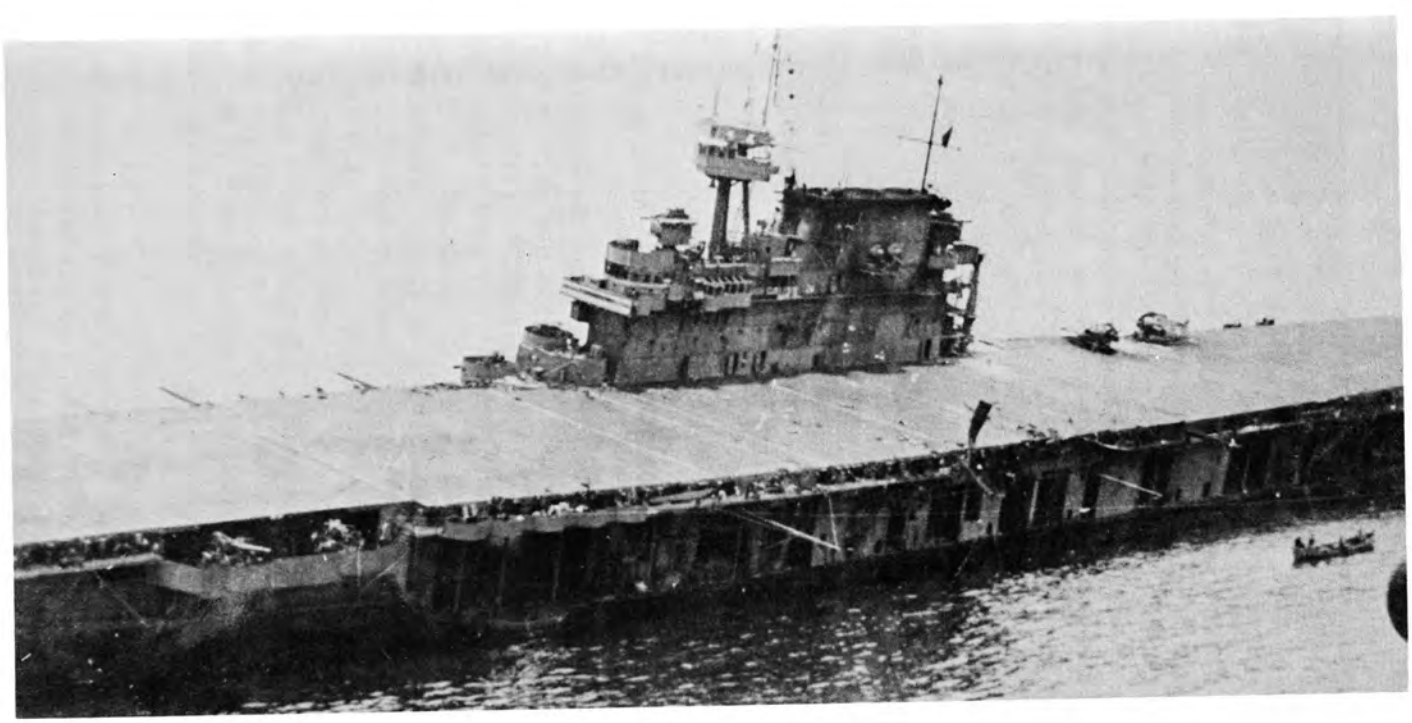
No question this time. The Japanese were turned back from taking Midway. The comparison of losses was.

U.S.	Japanese
1 Carrier	4 Carriers
1 Destroyer	
179 Planes	330 Planes

The Japanese also suffered damage to several war ships. 1 Battleship, 3 Destroyers, 1 Tanker.

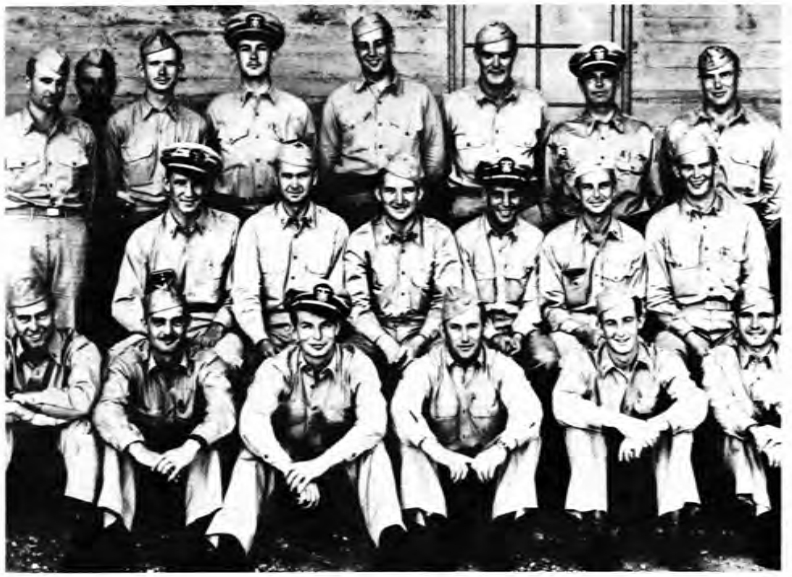
When the War started, the U.S. had seven Carriers and Japan had eleven. After the Coral Sea the total was U.S. 6; Japan 10. After Midway the total was U.S. 5; Japan 6.

This Photo was taken between attacks and shows a view of the Flight Deck with smoke billowing from the stacks. The ship was dead in the water at this time.



A view of the Yorktown following the second (Torpedo Attack) and after the word to abandon ship was passed. She is listing to port with the hangar deck almost awash. No one can be seen on deck.

A picture of the Yorktown with Destroyers close around picking up surviving crewmen. The severe list to port is very apparent in this view.



A Photo of the Pilots of TORPEDO SQUADRON THREE

This Photo was taken shortly before the Battle of Midway. The Men are identified as.
Left to right first row: Ens. C.A. Osberg; NAP. Baker; Ens. O.A. Powers; Ens. D. Roche; Ens. D. E. Weissenborn; NAP R. E. Weis;
Middle Row: Lt(jg) R. W. Suesens: Lt. P.H. Hart; LCDR L.E. Massey (Commanding Officer); Lt(jg) C.W. Howard; Lt(jg) J.N. Myers; Lt(jg)F.W. Herriman;
Back Row: NAP Harry Corl; Ens. W.F. Osmus; Ens. C.W. Schneider; Ens. J.W. Armitage; Ens. G.R. Stablein; Ens. L.L. Smith; NAP J.W. Haas; NAP W.G. Esders:

There are twenty men pictured. Twelve of these men flew in the Battle of Midway. Ten of the twelve that flew, died that day. Harry Corl (far left back row) and W.G. Esders (far right back row) survived.

9 — TRAINING IN TBFs

(AS I REMEMBER)

By Mid June, we were pretty well sorted out and with orders in hand, I rode a bus over the Pali to the Navy Air Base at Kaneohe Bay, where I became a part of the re-organized Torpedo Squadron VT-3. Here we were introduced to our new planes. They were TBFs. Compared to the TBDs they were huge planes. Our first thoughts were, could these be landed on carriers. I was assigned to an air crew consisting of the Pilot, Harry Corl, Bombardier, Townsend with myself as Radioman and Tail Gunner. The TBF had a 50-caliber machine gun mounted in a turret and a single 30 caliber machine gun mounted to the rear of the Bomb Sight/Radio compartment, pointing downward and to the rear. Entrance for the bombadier and radioman was through a hatch in the side of the plane. We would not need to wear helmets or goggles as we would not be exposed to the slipstream while in the plane. We would instead only have to wear a light set of headphones. Also it would not be possible to move around as required wearing the usual seat pack type parachute. In our new plane we would use a chest type. In a chest type, you wore only the harness and then if needed put the parachute pack on with two large snaps near your chest. The parachute pack was stored and carried inside the Bomb Sight/Radio Compartment. Also quite different, the bombs and/or torpedo were carried internal to the aircraft in an enclosed Bomb Bay.

We spent about four weeks getting acquainted with our new planes. This included, learning to fly it, gunnery practice and practice at bombing and dropping torpedoes. It also included a lot of practice at simulated carrier landings.

The Radio equipment was identical to that we had in the TBDs so there was nothing new for me to learn here as we continued to practice "radio silence"

Out at Waikiki Beach were two very nice Hotels. The Royal Hawaiian and the Moana Loa. These hotels had catered to the few tourists that came to the Islands prior to the war. The Navy took over these hotels and they were used as R&R facilities for Submarine Crews and Air Crews that were in port. One week I was lucky enough to be able to spend several days relaxing at the Royal Hawaiian. It was real nice to spend some time there. It was not possible to forget the war as all around you were other sailors and to get to the beach required slipping through the few openings provided in the Barbed Wire Entanglements that were placed on all the beaches shortly after December 7.

On July 17th we packed up and flew out to and landed aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise. My assignment now was as part of the First String Air Crews of VT-3. It was strange to land on the Enterprise. The ship was identical to the Yorktown and as we landed it seemed that we were back home, yet as we taxied forward it struck me that the familiar faces of the deck crew I had known were not there. I found that I felt a feeling of homesickness for My old ship and its crew.

Every where I went on the Enterprise were strangers. It was for a few days a problem I had to overcome. There were also other minor differences in the ships. One in particular caused me a small problem. A ladder (or steps for you landlubbers) ran from the Hangar Deck up to the Flight Deck. From the Hangar Deck it ran about half way up, had a sort of landing or flat area then the rest of the way up. On each side of these steps were bannisters or polished steel rails. Going up you generally ran. Coming down you grabbed the rails with both hands and actually slid down on

your hands with your feet raised off the steps. Then a quick bounce with your feet on the landing and you could slide the rest of the way to the Hangar Deck with out ever touching the steps. At the landing there were some pipes that ran vertically between the Hangar Deck and Flight Deck. On the Yorktown, the rail was formed out and around these pipes and as you slid down you learned to place your fingers on top of the rail as you passed the pipes on the landing. On the Enterprise, the rail stopped and began again on the other side of the pipes. I almost broke my neck a couple of times before I learned to cope with this difference.

As we left Pearl we headed south and learned that we were to be a part of a force that would cover the landing of some Marines on the Island of Guadalcanal.

Our squadron now had new planes so we were no longer relegated to the task of anti-submarine patrol. Each day we would fly one search mission. One day the morning search the next day the late afternoon search. We didn't always fly the same plane.

One day our assigned plane was 3-T-13. We had the late mission. The radioman's assigned position during take offs and landings was buckled down in the Bomb Sight/Radio Compartment. The bombardier would crawl through passage and sit in the second seat. On search missions the bombardier would remain in the second seat and the radioman would then climb up into the turret to add his eyeballs to the search. I remember that I would have preferred to have used the turret for take offs and landings and actually felt safer in that position but of course followed directions. On this day just after clearing the deck, Corl got on the intercom and asked Townsend and me if we caught the sign that was held up as we took off. Townsend also had missed it and I was unable to see it.

As we started back toward the ship and it was time to turn on the radio receiver in order to pick up the (line of sight) ZB directional signals that the ship sent out, I went down to the Radio Compartment and found the Radio Equipment flooded with Hydraulic Fluid. I do not know if this was the cause of our not being able to pick up the ZB signals or if the Radio itself did not work. At any rate if we were to get back it would rely on Corl's navigation. When we got back to where the ship was supposed to be, it was not to be seen. We climbed to get a slightly better distance view and perhaps better pick up the ZB signals and started a box search. After some long anxious minutes, Corl caught a glimpse of the ships and we were soon safely on board. The sign we missed was a last minute change in course for the Carrier. The next day I noticed that 3-T-13 was being hoisted up among the spare planes that were carried in the overhead of the Hanger Deck. It was a close call for us and we fully realized it. On several occasions planes had become lost near the Carrier and were unable to locate it. One occasion in particular came to my mind at that time. An SBD was sent up to tow a target for the shipboard guns to take target practice at. In order to tow the target, it was necessary to remove the small stub of an antenna that was part of the ZB equipment. It wouldn't be needed as the plane would not be out of sight of the ships. Sure enough the pilot wandered off a little too far and he was never heard from again.

When we set sail, we had several fighter pilots that were not qualified for Carrier Landings. This required the completion of several simulated carrier landings on land. As we sailed south and near Tongatabu we left Townsend behind and loaded the Landing Signal Officer and a Fighter Mechanic in our TBF and flew over to an airfield on Tongatabu. The fighter pilots to be trained, were allowed to take off from the Enterprise but before they could land back aboard they needed some dry land practice.

There was a very small airfield there that was manned by a squadron of P40s. We stayed overnight with the P40 guys and the new pilots spent the better part of two days practicing. When the P40 pilots heard that we had a radioman they descended on me to have me write down the morse code for them. Seems they needed to know this for use in identification signals whenever ships arrived at Tongatabu. No one on the island knew the code, nor had a copy. I wrote it down for them and spent a little time with them on using and reading blinker.

As we started our planes to go back to the Enterprise, one of the fighters had trouble starting. The F4F fighter was started with a cartridge type starter. About like a 10 gauge shot gun shell blank. It finally started on the last cartridge and our new fighter pilots landed aboard in good shape.

9 — TRAINING IN TBFs

(RETROSPECT AND HISTORY)
(June 15 thru Aug 1, 1942)

Our new planes were a considerable improvement over the TBDs. The following comparison is made using information that I have available.

	TBD	TBF
Engine		1700 hp
Top speed	200 knots	270 knots
cruise speed	120 knots	145 knots
range	700 nmi	1200 nmi
ceiling	15,000 ft	22,000 ft
armament fwd	1 30 caliber	1 30 caliber
armament aft	1 30 caliber	1 50, 1 30 caliber
gas tanks	not self sealing	self sealing

Our training at Kaneohe was very intensive. At no time while I was in VT-5 did we work so hard at overall training. We were a new group and we had new planes and equipment that we had to learn to use.

In looking back, I can now realize that we really needed to practice radio communication very badly. Here we had new planes with new transmitters and we never turned them on even once to see if they would work, or to see if we were capable of using them. Certainly it would have been safe enough to have tried them out while we were at Kaneohe. We should have had some radio communications training along with all the other work that we did. It was not to be.

Photo is of a TBF-1 in flight. This gives a clear view of the turret, (my place) the tunnel gun at the bottom and the second seat green house (Townsend's seat during search missions)

10 — GUADALCANAL

(AS I REMEMBER)

In late July we joined up with about 20 Marine Transports and their escorting warships. It was the largest collection of fighting ships this country had ever put together. It included the brand new battle wagon U.S.S. North Carolina. This was the first time we had a battle wagon with us. It felt good. There were numerous heavy and light cruisers and destroyers all over the place. Also and most important, The carriers Saratoga and Wasp were there. The Saratoga newly patched up from her torpedo damage and the Wasp that had been called in from the Atlantic to bolster our declining carrier fleet.

August 7, 1942 was the date selected to land the Marines on Tulagi and Guadalcanal. Our day began as usual before sun up and the early missions were launched before dawn.

Our assignment this day was to fly a search mission along the coast of New Georgia Island to see if there were any enemy activities there. As we started our take off down the deck and got almost to the end, Corl cut the engine and slammed on the brakes and was able to stop the plane just short of a dive in the drink. Plane handlers quickly put us on the forward elevator and took us down to the Hangar Deck. With the elevator back up, the planes continued to take off. The mechanics jumped on the plane and Corl explained that the prop apparently would not stay in low pitch and we were not getting the power needed for take off. Within an hour the problem was found, fixed and we were back topside to try again.

This time we took off and started our search. This time we had a lot of island to look at instead of the

usual water. New Georgia is a beautiful tropical island more than 100 miles long and with hundreds of small lagoons and harbors. Looking at it prompted some conversation on the intercom concerning, if we had to set down somewhere, wouldn't this be a nice place to spend the rest of the war. I got a stiff neck that day from scanning the skies for enemy planes and doing my share of looking at the island.

Near the end of our search, we came to a small harbor that had a dock that was piled high with something that we could not quite figure out. We circled it a couple of times and noticed that there were no people to be seen. In our conversation, we discussed the reasons why every one apparently hid with the sight of an obviously American Plane and we concluded that the stuff piled up was scrap iron and Japanese were probably around and hiding from the plane. We were carrying four 500 lb bombs, so Corl had Townsend set one up for dropping and we made a glide bombing attack on the dock. The first bomb landed in the harbor, so we went around again and with two bombs at once, stirred up a bunch of dirt and dock.

As we left the island and headed back to the ship we came across a large outrigger canoe with about five natives in it. We went close by to look carefully at them. We no doubt scared them as they were paddling up a storm.

We returned to the ship and reported on what we had seen and done. That afternoon we flew a second mission to search an area of the ocean that had a plane down, but we found nothing. That evening before turning in, I was told to report to sick bay. Each aircrewman was given a big shot of medicinal bourbon. That was the first time I had ever taken a straight shot. It must have been good stuff as it slid down very nicely and I was able to drift off to sleep in short order.

The next day (August 8, 1942) our assignment was to search an ocean area to be sure there were no enemy ships slipping up on us.

On August 9th we withdrew to the East and left the Marines and landing ships with only surface ships to guard them.

Between August 9th and 24th we sailed around just out of reach of Guadalcanal and each day we flew the usual search missions.

During this time, two men from VT-3 that had missed the ship when we sailed from Pearl, came back aboard. It seems they were tired of all that sea duty and had decided to deliberately miss the ship's sailing and plead guilty to being AOL (Absent Over Leave). Their hope was that they would spend a few days in the brig and then get an assignment some where else. The Navy authorities apparently saw through their scheme. No they wouldn't need to spend any time in the Brig, there just happened to be some Troop Transports heading south that could help them catch up with their ship. So they were loaded in with the Marines and after going ashore with the first wave, and seeing a few days of shore duty on Guadalcanal, they were allowed to rejoin the Enterprise. We all got a first hand report of the landings and everyone agreed (including the guilty two) that the Navy Brass knew what they were doing.

10 — GUADALCANAL

(IN RETROSPECT)

I was disappointed that we didn't get to fly aircover for the marines. It was obvious to us that the dive bombers were better suited to taking care of the job to be done. The many search missions that we did fly were important to the overall success of the task, even though we did not find anything.

Every one on board was excited about the fact that we were finally beginning to take the initiative and at least begin to drive the Japanese back toward Japan.

I am sure now that the bombs we dropped blew up a dock full of copra. Copra is the dried meat of coconuts that is used to make coconut oil. The natives would gather the coconuts and remove the meat and dry it in the sun and were able to sell it as their only cash crop. After seeing Copra up close, I am sure that is what we blew up. Sorry about that, we really believed that the dock had something on it that should be destroyed.

10 — GUADALCANAL

(HISTORY Aug 7, thru Aug 23, 1942)

August 7, 1942 marks the day that the U.S. started the very long march to wrest back from the Japanese, all the territory that they were able to seize during the first 7 months of the War. The march was started before we were really ready to properly support it. The Japanese were building an Air Base on Guadalcanal and when it was finished, all of the Coral Sea area and the approaches to Australia would be under their control. The job of retaking Guadalcanal could not wait.

On August 7, the Marines landed with very little ground opposition. Bombers and Fighters flying down from Rabaul made the air over Guadalcanal hotly contested for the first two days. Our Carriers were able to protect the transports until they had unloaded. It was considered too dangerous for the Carriers to remain boxed in to an area small enough to provide air cover for more than the first two days. On August 9, the carriers withdrew to the east to do a better job of hiding from the enemy fleet. The defense of the immediate area was left to five cruisers and a bunch of destroyers.

That night, the Japanese taught the Americans a lesson in night naval action as they came down the slot and sank the American cruisers Quincy, Vincennes and Astoria along with the Australian cruiser Canberra. Also the Chicago was badly damaged. The Jap fleet was undamaged but as morning approached it withdrew without touching the transports or the beaches stacked high with materials. Our Carriers possible presence caused them to withdraw before daylight.

A shipmate that had been in VT-5, died on the Vincinnes. An Iowa boy named Hayes. I was to talk to his parents about 1 year later.

This night time success would be continued for some time with light surface forces coming down the slot between the Solomon Island Chain, shooting up the beaches and anything in sight and landing men and supplies under cover of darkness and then with-drawing before daylight. It came each night on such a regular schedule that the Marines began to call it the Tokyo Express. During the days, the U.S. forces would slip in with light transports to land supplies and during the night the Japanese landed theirs.

On August 20th, the Marines and SeaBees had completed enough of the airfield that we were able to land 20 Fighters and 12 Dive Bombers. With an unsinkable carrier on Guadalcanal, we were now in a position to consolidate our gains. Also, the Japanese recognized that they must retake the island or they would be forced to retreat up the island chain.

11 — AUGUST 24, 1942

(AS I REMEMBER)

The day began as a normal day with our plane scheduled for a routine search mission beginning in the early afternoon. I was not aware of there being any thing special about this particular mission. As usual, Corl did not offer any special instructions as to what we should be on the look out for. I did not go to the Ready Room that day so to me it was to be nothing more than a routine search. I recall that I arrived at the plane a little later than I generally would, but cannot recall that there was any reason for this. Our plane was parked on the starboard side, aft of the island, on the very edge of the flight deck. I also recall that the engines were started prior to my entering the plane. I was struggling in the prop wash trying to get my life jacket fastened when someone jumped out of the catwalk and held the straps down for me while I finished fastening them. It was very difficult to get into the life vest in side the plane because of the cramped quarters there. It was standard procedure to put it on while standing up outside the plane. The parachute harness was then placed over the life vest.

The take off was routine with Townsend in the second seat and myself buckled down in the bomb bay compartment. Immediately after the take off, I climbed into the turret and added my eyes to the search mission. The weather was not much different than most of the days in that part of the world in August. The water was a deep blue with some white caps. There were widely scattered rain showers with the rain clouds hovering at about 5000 ft. In order to gain the maximum vision to the horizon, we were flying a little below the rain clouds. These particular days were beautiful with the rain clouds just above us and their streaks of rain slanting down into the ocean made dark

in spots by the shadows of the clouds and with the brilliant deep blue of the surrounding water that was bathed in bright sunshine. I should have tumbled that this day might be special as we were flying a two plane mission instead of the usual single plane search. Shortly after we had turned on the second leg of our three leg triangle, Corl passed the word back that there was something on the port horizon. We turned to port and shortly, Corl instructed Townsend to prepare for a bombing run and immediately the planes started to climb. We climbed right on above the clouds and even from my rearward facing seat, I could now make out a ship trailing a very long white wake. At about 12,000 ft we leveled and started a two plane horizontal bombing run on what appeared to be a Japanese Cruiser. For Townsend and I, it was our first look at an enemy ship. It is not possible to describe the feelings you have as you look directly at your enemy for the first time. I had previously seen only the flying boat as it plunged toward the water in the Marshsall Island engagement, and the glimpse of the torpedo planes sweeping in at Midway. But there he was, my country was at war, there below me was an enemy ship and we would shortly be trying to blow him out of the water and we could be sure that he would soon train his anti-aircraft guns on us. I recognized the moment as a once in a lifetime experience and I remember feeling a great sense of excitement without fear. As anticipated, as we drew closer, the AA guns began firing and at first were at about the right altitude but far to our starboard. I got on the intercom, but only long enough to make sure Corl was aware that the AA bursts were marching along beside us on our starboard side. Each of us fully understood that in a horizontal bombing run, the Norden bomb sight, when engaged actually took over and flew the plane straight and level as the bombardiers tracked the enemy ship. If the AA gunners were any good at all they certainly would have a good shot at us.

I do not know what brought my attention to the tail of

our own plane, but some holes suddenly appeared in the vertical stabilizer and in that same moment I saw the enemy plane with its red meatballs clearly visible on each wing, as it pulled up about 500 yards to our rear still heading in the opposite direction, climbing and turning for an obvious second pass. It appeared as if he had made a climbing run from ahead and below. He had caught us totally by surprise. No one expected a fighter over a lone cruiser. As I quickly pulled up the foot rest to make the turret ready for action, the bottom dropped out as Corl banked sharply to the starboard away from the other TBF and nosed down and headed for the clouds a little more than a mile below. We flew an erratic course through the clouds and then leveled off just below. After a few minutes and we had recovered slightly from this experience and had passed back and forth the reports of damage that we were able to observe, Corl instructed me to turn the transmitter on. Because of our difficulty in understanding Corl's voice on the intercom I remember having to ask him several times exactly what he wanted. After repeating back to him if he wanted the transmitter on, and receiving an affirmative answer, I had Townsend return to the second seat and climbed down to the radio equipment and switched on the Transmitter. Trying to remember what I had performed only one time, but had run through my mind many times, I turned the transmitter on and made a quick tune. I reported to Corl that it was ready and then listened while he transmitted a report that we had sighted an enemy cruiser and gave the location. We waited for an acknowledgement from the Enterprise but heard none. After a minute, I asked Corl if I should go to High Power and retune. He said yes. Just as I flipped the switch to full power, I heard what can best be described as loud firecrackers going off in the area of the radio equipment. Then without feeling it, I noticed a large wound in my right thigh. Without fully realizing what I was doing I remember removing the white handkerchief I had around my neck and started to put it around the injury. Then I heard Townsend on the

intercom saying "There's one coming in on the left" and an instant later "there's one on the right". I dropped the handkerchief, climbed into the turret and as I pulled the foot rest up under me; I remember the feeling of being slammed tightly against the turret seat that with the foot rest up, cradled me in a nearly fetal position. It suddenly grew dark and it seemed as if the turret was being crushed around me. I clearly remember saying to myself "This is it". There was no fear. I was totally ready to meet my maker. In my mind it was only an instant later that I became aware of the sensation of water on my face and total silence except for the gurgling sounds of being under water. Shortly came the realization that I was still alive and in the plane and under water. In the darkness I reached to my right to release the escape hatch only to find it was already open (or rather gone), I worked my way out of the hatch and pulled one of the CO_2 cartriges on my life jacket. Realizing that I did not know which way was up I waited for the life jacket to carry me up. The next sensation I had was of bumping into the plane. I was underneath it. I worked my way around the plane and free of it. Then I could see a circle of light. I swam toward it and broke to the surface. I do not recall any feeling of needing air. It seemed that I had plenty in my lungs. I looked around. The enemy planes were gone. Only a wheel from the plane and I were there. I remember my thoughts at that time as, "I'm in trouble, any search for a missing plane will never see a guy in a life vest and it is late in the day and any search will not be until morning". Almost before the thought was completed, a noise behind me caused me to turn and there, just breaking to the surface was the life raft from the plane. I swam a few strokes to it, grasped the line that encircled the raft and pulled the CO_2 bottle. It inflated and I pulled myself in.

Our training in survival had been non-existant so I really did not know what I would find in the boat, so I set about to see what I had. Another line clipped to

the (around the boat life line) had three canteens of water at the end dangling in the ocean. It also had the remanants of what was apparently a brown canvas bag. This bag was in shreds and was apparently supposed to contain survival rations and supplies. There were none. Inside the boat was a compartment that contained a pump, boat patching kit, metal signal mirror, two oars and a boy scout knife. I was wearing dungarees, shirt, shoes, socks, undershorts, a 45-caliber automatic pistol, lifevest and parachute harness. I removed the parachute harness and discarded it. I don't know why. It may have been of some use later. I also had a pencil that I carried in my shirt pocket.

My thoughts now were that now I had a chance. Surely the search planes would be able to find me. I remembered however the several times I had flown such missions without seeing a thing and I was remembering how difficult it was to see things this small in such a vast ocean. I looked myself over, including looking in the mirror. I had hundreds of small splinter wounds in my arms, legs and face. I had the large wound in my right thigh. It appeared as if someone had taken a sharp butcher knife and sliced the thigh muscle about one to one and one half inches deep. It was a very clean vee shaped cut. The layers of skin and the underlyng thigh muscle were very clear. I had no way to close the wound so it would just have to remain open for the time being. The other obvious significant wound was what appeared to be a bullet hole in the right ankle. As I sat in the boat I became aware that these wounds caused me no pain. There was absolutely no feeling of pain. I also recall that I had no feeling of fear at this time.

Soon I could see that the daylight was fading and it was time to face a night in the boat. I moved around, tried to find the best position to rest and settled down for the night. And thus ended for me, August 24, 1942.

HARRY CORL

PILOT

BOB TOWNSEND

BOMBARDIER

DELMAR WILEY

RADIOMAN

The crew that flew together from Mid June until August 24, 1943. Made from the best photos available.

11 — AUGUST 24, 1942

(IN RETROSPECT)

August 24 is the day in which the Battle of the Eastern Solomons took place. Our two plane section was only one of several that found the enemy fleet. In my reports to the various newspapers that later quizzed me, I believed that the planes that shot us down were probably float zeros that came from the cruiser. History points out that they came from a nearby Jap Carrier (Ryujo) that we did not see. We were apparently attacked by two planes. When our plane broke off the bombing attack and dove for the clouds, both zeros for some reason followed us. Our heavy TBF was able to gain distance on them until we leveled off and then they were able to again catch up with us. Had I remained in the turret I might have seen their approach. None of us did. Shortly after this time, the crews in TBFs were changed so as to leave the turret gunner in the turret at all times with the other crewman being trained to be both bombardier and radio operator. Obviously the right move.

I am now sure that no search was launched for me as the Enterprise was that afternoon engaged in combat with an enemy fleet and was seriously damaged in an air attack. Pictures of the action of that day show a bomb hit near the very place our plane was parked before take off. I have wondered if the sailor that jumped up to help me put on my life vest was there when the bomb hit and if he survived. None of my personal effects were ever sent home. I also understand that the compartment we lived in was damaged that day.

On this day, began a series of (what I can only refer to as) miracles that were to occur during this

adventure. Let's recount them. Reaching the turret barely in time to be positioned in probably the only spot that allowed me to survive the crash. Reaching the turret sooner and turning it left or right to meet the incoming planes would have probably resulted in my not surviving the impact with the water. Coming to in time to reach the surface before drowning. The life boat some how getting out of the plane and coming to the surface without holes in it when the provision bag which was very near it was shredded. My wounds being only superficial. Either one of the two major wounds could have been fatal if they had occurred somewhere else

I have thought many times about Corl's actions in leaving the bombing run to get out of there. The other plane also left. After many years of thinking this through, I am certain in my own mind that they made the proper decision in trying to report to the Enterprise, what we had found. To have remained in the horizontal bombing run would have been fool hardy. History has shown that no one hit anything that could move, with such a run. Staying alive to get the message home was the right decision.

The Enterprise did not get our message. Our ability to communicate by radio was very poor. I have thought many times of the opportunities that we should have taken to practice radio communications, instead of radio silence but we did not. Other accounts of the actions on this day, record that the Enterprise did not receive the search plane reports and was unable to redirect the attacks on the enemy due to poor radio communication that day.

After running the happenings of this day through my mind hundreds of times, I believe that Corl died or was totally incapacitated by the gunfire of the zeros. There were no evasive manuevers following the second attack. Also the plane apparently flew into the water in a level attitude. I believe that Corl was dead and

the pilotless plane flew level except downward into the water. The enemy planes never completed what would have been their third firing run. Townsend was obviously still alive after the second attack and probably died in the crash.

11 — AUGUST 24, 1942

(HISTORY Aug 24, 1942)

Information on the events of this day, are not readily available in any one book such as can be found on the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. Let me try to piece together information I have been able to gather, to give you a picture of the happenings of the Battle of the Eastern Solomons and the small part that Corl, Townsend and I played that day. Please remember that I had very little information of what was happening at that time.

Since August 9, 1942, the three U.S. Carriers, (Enterprise, Saratoga and Wasp) had been cruising to the north and east of Guadalcanal, staying out of range of Japanese planes, yet close enough to provide support if required. On August 20th, Marine and Navy planes had landed at Henderson Field and we now had an operational air field on Guadalcanal. Intelligence information indicated that the Japanese were planning to drive the Marines off Guadalcanal. This would first require the destruction of the three U.S. carriers. For this task the Japs had available the big carriers Shokaku and Zuikaku and the light carrier Ryujo. The Shokaku and Zuikaku had now been repaired and had new air groups following their problems in the Battle of the Coral Sea.

Admiral Fletcher guessed wrong about the timing of the arrival of the Jap Fleet and on August 23, sent the Wasp and escorting destroyers, south for refueling. This reduced his available forces by one third.

The Japanese Admiral (Yamamoto) set a plan to send the light carrier south to attack Henderson Field and to trap the Americans into revealing their positions by finding and attacking her. His two big carriers,

following close behind, would then catch the U.S. Carriers and destroy them. The recent lessons of the Coral Sea and Midway showed that in Carrier engagements, he who attacked first would win. Then with the U.S. Carriers out of action, his carriers, cruisers and battle wagons could wreck Henderson Field and drive the Marines to cover until the transports arrived with troops to mop up.

The morning of the 24th, Fletcher received a message from a PBY reporting the sighting of a carrier, cruiser and destroyers heading south. Fletcher partially discounted the report because he had received many similar false reports before. His morning search planes had found nothing and the night before, some of his planes were forced to land on Guadalcanal, after chasing a PBY report. He was anxious to get these planes back as they constituted a significant part of his force. They did get back that day, but the crews were exhausted.

At 1:15 he did order the launch of the afternoon search, much earlier than normal. 23 planes were launched, 7 TBFs and 16 SBDs. With one exception they were to fly in two plane groups.

Fletcher finally had to believe his PBY reports when the Enterprise Radar picked up and tracked planes from the Ryujo on their way to attack Guadalcanal. It was nervous time as they tracked these planes flying by, just out of sight. With his search planes still out and with no reports as yet forthcoming, at 2:30 Fletcher launched an attack force of 29 SBDs and 8 TBFs toward the spot he thought the Ryujo might be.

The earlier launched search mission was to have exceptional luck in locating the enemy and terrible luck in reporting or in attacks on them. VT-3 Skipper, LtCmdr Jett and Ensign Bye, found the Ryujo force and were able to execute a horizontal bombing run on the carrier before being detected. Their four

500 lb bombs landed near but astern of the Ryujo.

Lt. Myers and Machinist Corl found the leading Cruiser and were making a horizontal bombing run on it when they were both driven off by zero fighters from the Ryujo. Corl's plane was chased and shot down. Myers' plane was undamaged and he caught a glimpse of the trailing carrier as he left the area. On his way home and within 25 miles of the Enterprise, Myers' plane was shot up by zeros and both his crewmen wounded. He eventually landed on the Saratoga but his plane was so badly damaged that it was jetisoned over the side.

A third and fourth group of search planes also sighted the Ryujo and were also driven off by fighters. They all tried to send off radio contact reports. Then, Lt. Davis and Ensign Shaw, flying SBDs, found the Shokaku and Zuikaku. They both made a dive bombing run at the Shokaku and near missed. Their radio reports were heard by other planes and forwarded to Fletcher.

When Fletcher received the forwarded reports on Shokaku and Zuikaku, he saw the trap and tried to send a radio message to the attack group to redirect the attack from the Ryujo to the big carriers. This message like many that day, did not get through. With the Wasp and her planes way to the south, he had no planes he could send after the big carriers.

Out of the 23 planes in the search mission, ten had found the enemy. Except for Shaw and Davis, (none of the ten) had any luck getting their reports through.

At 4:06 the attack group found the Ryujo and by 4:20 she was ablaze and sinking. She finally went under at 8:00 that evening.

At 5:00, planes from Shokaku and Zuikaku, found the Enterprise and Saratoga. They were as ready as

they could get for the attack. Radar had given them the time needed to prepare. Over 50 fighters were in the air. All the guns were manned and all the flight decks were clear. The gasoline lines through out the ship were drained and then pressurized with CO_2. The Enterprise was hit by three bombs. The first was a delayed fuse type that entered the ship near the forward edge of the after elevator and exploded four decks below in the CPO quarters. (My bunk and locker were just above the CPO quarters. They were probably destroyed) The second hit near where the first entered, only it exploded just below the flight deck, wiping out the 5 inch gun crews on the aft starboard side. The third was apparently a faulty bomb that hit just aft of the island structure and exploded with a low order of detonation. The Saratoga was untouched.

A second attack was detected by Radar and the planes were tracked 50 miles to the west and south and then back north. Fletcher was clever enough to not send fighters after them, which would have attracted their attention.

Yamamoto's plan to trap the Americans worked fine. The U.S. forces found and attacked the little carrier. The Japs found the U.S. Carriers and launched two attacks. The best the first attack could do that day was three bomb hits on the Enterprise. The second did not locate the carriers. It cost them the Carrier Ryujo and half the planes and crews of the Shokaku and Zuikaku.

The American victory this day was clear cut. Guadalcanal was protected from carrier planes and from a large landing of Japanese soldiers. The carrier Ryujo and a Seaplane Tender (Chitose) were sunk. The Americans had lost 17 planes and the Enterprise was damaged.

Of the 17 planes lost, 5 were from Torpedo Squadron

Three. Corl's shot down, Myers' over the side. One other was badly damaged and was also sent over the side. Two were forced to ditch after running out of fuel. All the VT-3 crews were safe aboard ship except for Corl, Townsend and myself.

The carrier strength was now Japan 5 and the U.S. 5. The strength in the Pacific was U.S. 4, Japan 5. The U.S.S. Ranger was in the Atlantic.

The Enterprise was immediately sent off to Tongatabu and then on to Pearl for repairs.

12 - FIFTEEN DAYS

(AS I REMEMBER)

I could not sleep the first night. It was a terribly long night. The reasons were not of pain from the wounds or from fear. I was wet, cold and unable to find a comfortable position in the one end of the boat. The movement of the boat as it rode up and down the waves and swells kept me off balance as I tried to find a position in which to sleep. As the sun came up and I was able to get warm, I looked again at the way the boat was made. There was one air compartment that went completely around the boat and essentially formed the boat. This compartment was filled when the CO_2 cartridge was triggered. A second small compartment went from side to side and formed a seat on which you could sit in order to row with the oars. Above this second compartment was a strip of rubberized canvas (same as the rest of the boat) that went from side to side just above the second compartment. It occurred to me that if I removed this second compartment, I would be able to lay down in the bottom of the boat. I could not see any reason why removing this compartment would affect the sea-worthiness of the boat. Up to this time I had not inflated this second compartment. It could only be inflated by using the pump. I recognized that it tied the two sides of the boat together but so did the bottom and the the seat at the top. So I took the boy scout knife and with care, removed the second compartment. I was now able to slip under the remaining seat, and to lay down in the bottom of the boat. It was quite comfortable.

About mid morning, I was startled to see a shark about 5 feet long swimming around the boat. This was the first time I had ever seen a shark up close. I watched him for a while and tried to chase him away with an oar. My concern about this guy was in the event a wave should upset the boat I did not want to

be in the water with him. I did not believe he posed any problem with regard to being able to bite the boat or to by himself, upset the boat. I got the 45 and as he nosed up close to the boat, I took careful aim at the middle of his head and fired. With one big splash he was gone. I could not miss as I was firing from a distance of only inches.

Among my possesions when I entered the boat was a pencil that I was carrying in my shirt pocket. The pencil was of the type that extended the lead by pushing on the eraser end. The pencil remained operable in the salt water environment. I knew that the day I went in the water was August 24, 1942. I started a calendar on the side of the boat with the pencil.

The second night I was able to sleep very good. I was not as cold as I was able to stretch out in the bottom of the boat and the warm water of the ocean warmed me some through the thin boat bottom. The top of me was cold but all in all not too bad.

The second morning brought several more sharks. I recall about three. I did not try to kill these as it was obvious that this was going to keep happening and I would not be able to kill all the sharks in the ocean. I would just have to be as careful as possible about upsetting the boat. Actually by lying in the bottom, the center of gravity was low enough that it would take quite a wave to upset it. By now I also had some feel for how the boat rode the waves. Upsetting did not seem to be a problem. The biggest problem was with waves breaking just as the boat neared the crest and splashing water into the boat. Not dangerous, but uncomfortable to get drenched at night.

About mid morning I saw something on the horizon. Whatever it was seemed to be very close. My first thought was that it was the top of a submarine. My

eyes were frozen to that part of the horizon and I strained to see what it was each time the boat was carried to the top of a swell. I soon came to realize that the horizon is very close from the very surface of the ocean. Being used to seeing the horizon from the flight deck and from several thousand feet while flying, I was surprised as it became obvious that I was looking at the very tip top of some type of cargo ship, and that it was very close. As I watched and watched from the top of each swell, the ship came closer and closer and I was able to make out more of the superstructure. I could not make out any flag. I easily decided that it did not matter whether it was ours or the enemy, I really had no choice but to try to signal it. I got out the mirror and flashed it repeatedly in the direction of the ship. As I flashed and watched and flashed and watched, I began to see other ships also appear. Still I was only seeing the very tops of the superstructures. It appeared that what I was seeing was a convoy moving slowly by, from southeast to northwest. More flashing and soon from what appeared to be the rear of the convoy, came what was obviously some type of warship heading toward me. It at first headed right toward me and then turned to its starboard and approached me on the side that was opposite of the convoy. As it got closer my spirits tumbled as I could now make out the flag with the Rising Sun flying from a rear mast. It appeared to be a light cruiser. It passed close enough that I could clearly see the sailors dressed in white, lining the sides to take a look at me. As I sat there and stared at my enemy, I was sure the Captain and others looked me over through their binoculars.

My thoughts were, "If they pick me up I guess it will be alright. If they shoot me it will be alright in that this ordeal will be over. If they leave me here that will be alright too." I remembered Lt. Ewoldt and Machalinski and their encounter with a Jap destroyer off Guadalcanal, so I really expected they would treat me the same and just leave me alone. In

the anti-climax of knowing that my possible rescuer was Japanese, I found myself suddenly exhausted from the exertion and tension of watching and flashing and wondering if they saw me and wondering if they were friendly, so I just lay down in the bottom of the boat to await my fate. It was perhaps 15 minutes later that I looked again and saw the cruiser disappearing over the horizon along with the convoy. They were soon gone and I was again alone.

Day 3 began a routine that was to change very little for the following days and nights. Each dawn was greeted with a careful search of the horizon to see if there are any ships or signs of land. The sun was at first welcomed as it warmed me and then became something to try to stay out of as much as possible. I was wearing dungarees with a short sleeved shirt. I used the material from the removed compartment to shield my face and arms from the sun as much as possible. It got very hot in the bottom of the boat so I sat up during the day to catch the breezes and cooled myself with the ocean water. As the afternoon wore on I tried to time the wetness such that I would be dry for the night. It seemed however that late each day or just after dark, one of the waves would break just right to drench me and the boat. I tried to be dry at night but cannot recall that I was successful even once.

I did not establish any specific way to ration myself with the water. I just went as long as I could and then took a good mouthful and rinsed it around my mouth and then swallowed it. It was not very refreshing as it was warm and tasted very metallic from being in the metal canteen. I was never hungry, but was always thirsty. I was unable to get the top off of one of the canteens. I worked and worked and finally was able to pull the rivet that held the top to a small chain that kept the top and canteen from getting separated. The small hole that this provided would not let the water run out, but I discovered that

by blowing air into the canteen to pressurize it, I was able to get the water out. Several days I passed through rain showers. I tried to collect and save the water that was caught in the boat. The first time I tried I found that it was too salty to drink. On two occasions it rained long enough that by using my shoe and bailing out the first water that collected, I was able to get a shoe-full that was almost drinkable. I drank some and, during the second week, saved some for later use by putting it in the then empty canteen. I believe it was fresh enough to do me some good. On one occasion, after several days without rain and the canteens getting low, I tried to do the one thing you are not supposed to do. I took a mouthful of sea water and downed it. It was terrible and I found that I had to take a drink of my precious water afterwards. It did not make me sick but I was sure after that experience that salt water was not the answer. I was able to live for the first seven days on one canteen of water. The next eight days, I drank two canteens plus the rainwater.

About the 4th day I decided that if I could get one of the seagulls that kept coming by I would try to eat it. I was not hungry but recognized that any food I could get would help me stay alive. I also recognized that my 45 would not remain useable for long after being in salt water. So I waited with gun in hand until a seagull came close and then fired. I remember that I got one with about the 2nd shot. It fell into the water and I was able to retrieve it with an oar before the sharks got there. I pulled out all the feathers and found that a sea gull is all bone and feathers. I tried chewing some of the flesh that was on the legs but gave up shortly and let the sharks have it. I really did not get anything worthwhile from the bird.

The sharks grew in number each day. There were days when there were too many to count. They swam around and under the boat. I became quite accustomed to

their constantly bumping the boat and the feeling of their upper fins as they swam under the boat as I lay on the bottom.

On another day, about number 10, I wondered if there was a way to catch one of these ever present sharks. I removed the spring from the one CO_2 cartridge activator that I had expended in my life jacket and worked to fashion a sort of hook. I then fastened it to the handle of one of the oars and carefully slipped it just under the head of one of the smaller sharks and jerked. The shark instantly took off with a lot of splashing and almost jerked the oar away from me. It was easy to determine that I did not want to risk losing an oar or having that thing in the boat with me. So much for fishing.

My bodily functions slowed and almost ceased entirely. The small wounds that I had, healed during the first week. The large one did not, of course, and it became what I would describe as surface infected. There were never any signs of infection other than at the very surface. I spent each day exposing it to the sun as much as possible. I did not know if this helped or not. It occurred to me that the ultra violet rays would perhaps kill some of the infection. Perhaps it did.

When you are all alone and in desperate circumstances, it is very easy to learn to pray. I had had very little exposure to Sunday School or Church but I found that this was not a handicap in this situation. I prayed a lot. It helped immensely to be able to do so. I was never afraid and experienced no fear during these days. Some how, it always seemed that it would end in a happy way. However, somedays when it was hot and I was cooling myself in the water, and sometimes during the cold nights while I could feel the warmth of the water, it occurred to me that when the time came, the best way to end the ordeal would be by slipping into the water and sinking. Yes, I did

contemplate suicide as a way out, but the thoughts did not remain with me for very long at a time. Perhaps it was the ever present sharks that caused those thoughts to leave.

My mind remained absolutely clear at all times. There were no times of halucinations or delirium. There was, of course plenty of time for thinking of home and other places. The proper term is probably day-dreaming. One day-dream that I can remember having is one where I would be at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel and would go to a grocery store and buy a can of Dole Pineapple and open it and drink the juice and eat the whole can of fruit. I remember that I promised myself that when I got out of the situation I was in that I was going to do that very thing. I haven't as yet kept that promise. One other happening that I recall that might come close to delirium was a night when it was colder than usual and rainy. This night came very close to being too much to bear. I tried to cry but could not. I got out the whistle and blew it as loud as I could. The noise of the whistle and being able to at least do something in the blackness of a cold drizzly night helped me to stay in touch with the reality of the situation.

About the 10th day, I saw what appeared to be some rocks on the horizon. My thoughts were that perhaps there was land on the far side and if I could get nearer, perhaps I could then see land in that direction. I got out the oars and rowed about half the day but was unable to make any headway toward the rocks. I drifted on by them much faster than I could row.

About the 13th day I decided I should give the sea gulls another go. Using an oar I was able to knock one down so that it landed right in the boat. Pulling the feathers once again revealed skin and bones. I gutted it with my boy scout knife and chewed on the heart and liver. Then I again tried the legs and

wings. Not much luck. I decided that sea gull was not going to keep me alive. About the same day, or perhaps the next, a coconut shell with just a small amount of coconut meat and some fish eggs came floating by. I retrieved it and was able to eat the fish eggs and coconut meat. The total amount was about two mouthfuls.

On the morning of the 15th day, I didn't need to scan the horizon for signs of land or ships. My first glance at the new day revealed the tops of palm trees. Remembering the day that I had rowed toward the rocks, I got out the oars and set myself to the task of rowing with all my remaining strength toward these trees. They were a beautiful sight. Just the tops were showing and it seemed as if they were all the same exact height. When you row a boat, you set with your back to the place you are trying to row to. The best way is to pick something, if you can, that is immediately to your stern and row away from it. As I did this, I first picked out a cloud to guide me and as I rowed I would check quite often to see if I was still headed right. Then a rainbow served as my guide. As the first rainbow disappeared it seemed that another would appear near enough to serve as its replacement. As I rowed and rowed it seemed that I was making progress. I would stop only long enough to check my bearings and to take a drink. I finished the last of my water. I do not know how I was able to find the strength to row as much as I did. Slowly but surely the Palm Trees seemed to get closer. and I was able by early afternoon to see the trunks that held up the green tops. A little later I could see some surf breaking. I was sure that was the beach. Later it became obvious that the breaking surf was on a reef that was between me and the beach. I rowed and rowed and by late afternoon I came near the reef. As I got almost to the reef I could feel the boat being picked up by the breakers much as I remembered the same feeling when I tried surfing at Waikiki. After several breakers had passed under me the boat was picked up

and carried over the reef and I found myself in the calm water of a lagoon. I remember clearly that within the reef and without having to try to see over the waves, I could now see the sandy beach of the Island I was approaching. I looked down through the unbelievably clear water at the bottom of the lagoon which was only about 6 to 10 feet deep at this point and rested as I looked at the incredible beauty of coral formations and of the many small multicolored fish swimming about. At a time when you would think that I would have more important things on my mind, I clearly remember saying to myself "I must somehow see more of this".

I resumed rowing and soon I saw a canoe with natives heading toward me. I stopped rowing and waited for their arrival. As soon as they were within shouting distance, I heard one say "You got smokum". I replied, "No". As they got closer I told them that I was an American and that I had been shot down. They seemed to know what I meant by being American. I recall that I felt a real sense of pride in being able to say "I am an American". They grabbed the line around the boat and began towing me toward the island. There were about five adult men in the canoe. They were dressed in only a wrap-around cloth. Their skin was quite dark and their hair was very fuzzy. They were quite different from the natives I remembered seeing in the Tonga Islands. First they used paddles and as we got very near the beach they resorted to using poles to move the canoe along. Soon we reached the beach and they lifted me, boat and all, and carried me up on the beach. Everyone on the island must have been there when we arrived. There was much excited chattering and pointing. Women and girls had joined the group and they were dressed the same as the men and boys. Only a cloth around the waist. The younger children, boys and girls under about 5, wore only their birthday suits.

I told them I was thirsty and someone soon appeared with a green coconut with the top hacked out. I drank it slowly, remembering the western movies I had seen where the Hero, after wandering in the desert for days without water would be cautioned to drink slowly. In my whole life I had never tasted anything as sweet and cool as this. It was a drink that will be easy to remember the rest of my life. I was asked if I needed more and as I said yes, a second coconut was handed to me. I did not drink fast but I remember that I consumed seven before I felt satisfied. I was then asked if I was hungry. I said yes and shortly someone showed up with some boiled green bananas. I ate about three and told them that that was enough. After some more chattering and pointing it began to grow dark. I was carried, boat and all to a small lean-to made of poles and leaves, and placed inside and soon I was once again alone, still in the bottom of the boat but this time with solid ground beneath me and a grass roof over my head. I remember thinking that I did not know what lay ahead but for now the hard ground felt real good. I also recall wondering how I would go to the bathroom if needed, after drinking all that liquid. I decided I could somehow stumble down to the beach. The date by my calendar was September 8, 1942. I said a prayer of thanks and thus ended for me, fifteen days, almost to the hour, of drifting in a rubber boat.

12 — FIFTEEN DAYS

(IN RETROSPECT)

Very few people have ever, or will ever experience being totally alone for a period of over two weeks in a rubber boat on the ocean. Others have spent time in rubber boats including, the B17 Crew we will meet later and Capt Eddie Rickenbaker, but not all alone. Here was a 20 year old kid with no training in survival, wounded, totally on his own, and facing a terrible set of circumstances. No one to talk to or to listen to. No way of knowing what the next day would bring. Exposed to the hot tropical sun in the daytime, wet and cold at night. It is not possible to describe this experience in a way that can convey to any one, how it really was. I have asked myself many times how did I do it? The only answer I get is, "A person can do what has to be done." I have tried my best to describe this experience and hope I have at least partially succeeded.

I believe that I conducted myself during this time in the best way possible, so as to remain alive at the end of the 15 days. I was careful with the water I had, made the best possible use of the little rain I caught, and made the most of the equipment and knowledge that I had. There was possibly a way to catch sharks for food. This is the one area where I feel that I may have failed myself. I was able to keep total control of my emotions and mind.

If I had missed the Islands that I finally landed on, I believe that the course of drift I was on would have taken me parallel to the Solomon Islands and that I would not have seen land for many days. I believe I could have remained alive for at least one more week or for a total of about 21 days. I believe this in spite of the fact that I had drank the last of my

water on the 15th day. Had I not seen the island I would not have drunk it all. Another important aspect of my landing on these low lying Islands was the following: If rather than finding these islands, I had first seen a mountainous island like Bouganville, the problem of rowing to it could have been monstrous. I traveled about 5 miles and was aided by the fact that I probably would have drifted there without rowing, as opposed to seeing an island like Bouganville which can be seen from a distance of 30 miles on a reasonably clear day. The frustration of being able to see land and not being able to get to it may have done me in.

I believe, therefore, that the miracles continued in that I drifted to these particular islands and that I was able to reach them while still alive. After looking at the reef that surrounded the islands at high and low tides, I believe that I reached one of the few places on the reef that was safe to cross at a time when the tides were such that I was safely carried across. During the day while I was rowing, it seemed that I continuously had a rainbow for a guide. This may or may not be true, but rainbows were not that numerous in that area and I had one where it was helpful for the most part of a day. I was sure at the time that it was put there for my benefit.

I was a very skinny kid when I got to the island. When I viewed my right thigh, the wound on the outside nearly reached the bone. The fatty flesh that is normally on the inside of that thigh was almost non-existent at the end of the 15 days, from the lack of nourishment. My right thigh was almost down to the bone from both sides. Weeks later I would start to lose my toenails, another sign of malnutrition.

The Newspaper stories in the Des Moines Register told about the pain I suffered from the wounds and of delirium that I supposedly experienced. I mention this here for those readers that may have access to

our Scrap Books that contain those articles. These stories were not factual on these points. I experienced no pain and except for the day-dreams described, I experienced no delirium.

It was strange that I felt no pain from the wounds. I suppose it was just shock that covered it up. As I later walked on my ankle, I felt pain as you would expect. This pain was from the shrapnel in the ankle and the working of the ankle around it. It was also strange that I felt no fear. I had before felt fear of course, and many times since I have been afraid where I came close to an auto accident or other happening. Perhaps, it is that the closer you are to death that fear is not present. With this experience I can understand how men in battle could fully expose themselves to enemy fire in order to perform their duties. Perhaps this also can explain how in the old west, men could face each other in the shoot-outs we have seen portrayed on the screen many times. If this is the case, then none of us need have fear of being afraid to die. Perhaps others will also find that the closer you are to dying, the less fear you will experience.

It is a study in frustration to try to understand why the Japanese Cruiser did not pick me up. As it turned out, they did the best thing for me. When you try to figure out their reasoning for those particular actions, you should perhaps give up before you start. In my own mind, however I have to run through it.

1. The humane thing to do would be to pick me up, render medical assistance and send me to a POW camp.

2. The next possibility was to pick me up, question me and then execute me. While I was in the boat, this possibility never occurred to me. At that time we did not have information of the terrible treatment that POW's received at the hands of the Japanese. The book "Miracle at Midway" tells of Airmen who were picked

out of the water during the Battle of Midway, who were first questioned and then executed. These reports came from after the war interviews with men who were on the Japanese ships at that time. One young man who met this fate was Ensign Osmus of VT-3. He survived being shot down during the Battle of Midway, only to be executed after being picked out of the water by a Japanese Destroyer.

3. The next possibility was to shoot at me with a gun of some type. Probably a machine gun. After all I was the enemy and we had had reports of guys in parachutes being shot. I some what expected this, and was prepared for it in my mind.

4. The last possibility that you would think they would have considered was just leaving me alone. Perhaps their reasoning was, that is the easiest thing to do. No boat to lower to go get me. No gun to load and clean. Or perhaps the reasoning was that leaving me there was really the most inhumane treatment they could think of. ? WHO KNOWS: This is the possibility that I expected, but only because I had first hand information that they had done it before in this way.

12 — FIFTEEN DAYS

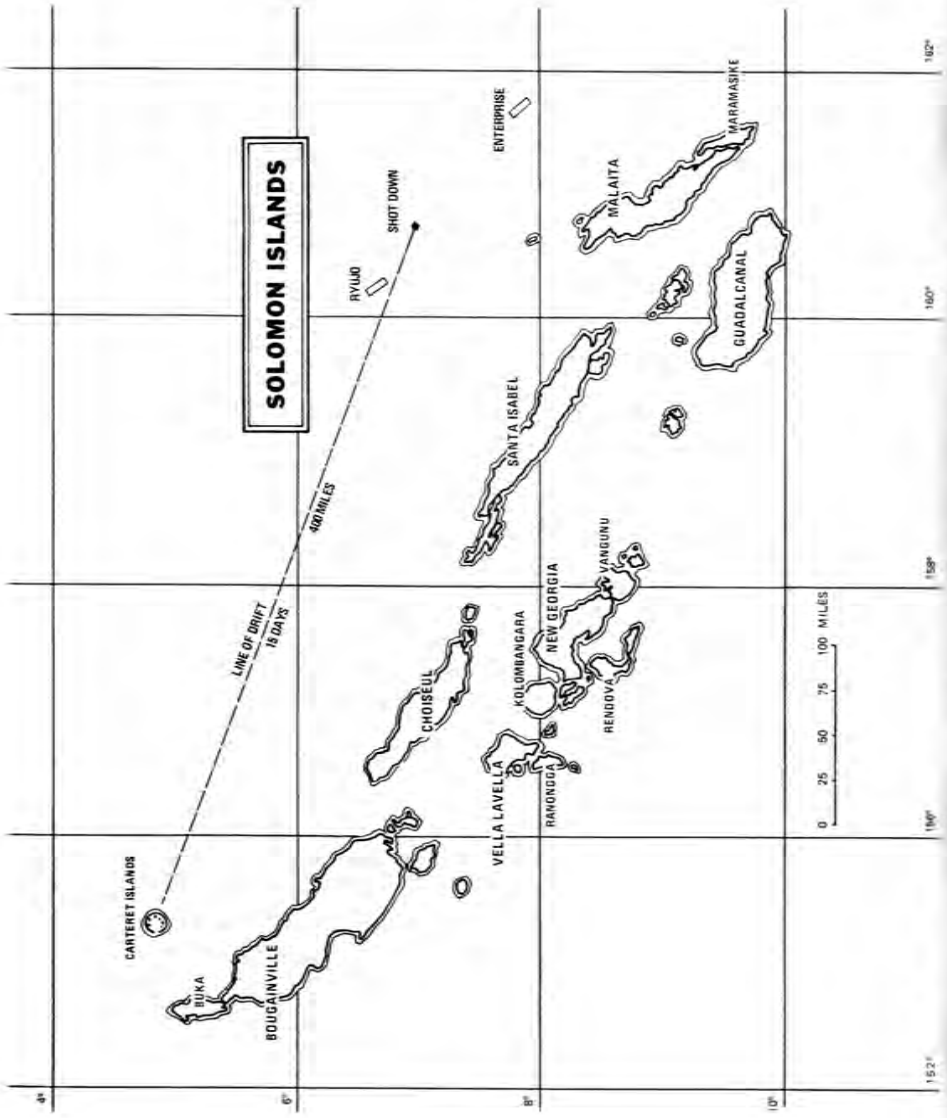
(HISTORY Aug 24 thru Sept 8, 1942)

On August 25th, the Saratoga and the damaged Enterprise withdrew to the Coral Sea. The Wasp moved north and flew search missions, but was unable to find the remaining Jap carriers, (or me) She too then moved south and joined Saratoga in the Coral Sea. The Enterpise then headed for Pearl for repairs.

Even though Yamamoto had lost a carrier and half of his planes, he at first thought he had achieved his objective and continued south with the troop transport Kina Maru. On August 25, Marine dive bombers from Henderson Field found them and damaged the light cruiser Jintsu and set the Kina Maru on fire. At this point, Yamamoto retired to the north to regroup and make further plans.

The only Japanese ships in the area that I could have seen from my rubber boat on the day of August 26, were the ships in the group including the Kina Maru. When they passed me by, they were heading northwest. I now believe these were the ships I saw.

On August 30, 1942, Jap submarines found the Wasp and Saratoga and were able to hit the Saratoga. This was the second time she had taken a torpedo from a sub. She missed the Midway Battle by being in Bremerton, Washington for repairs after being hit on January 11, 1942. She was out of action that time for five months. She was too big to repair in Pearl so had to again be sent all the way back to Bremerton.



13 — ISLAND LIFE

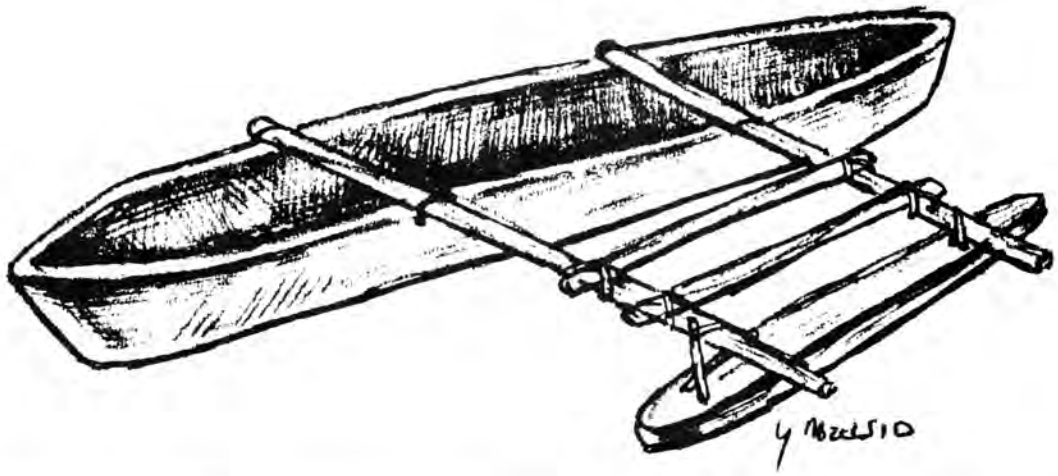
(AS I REMEMBER)

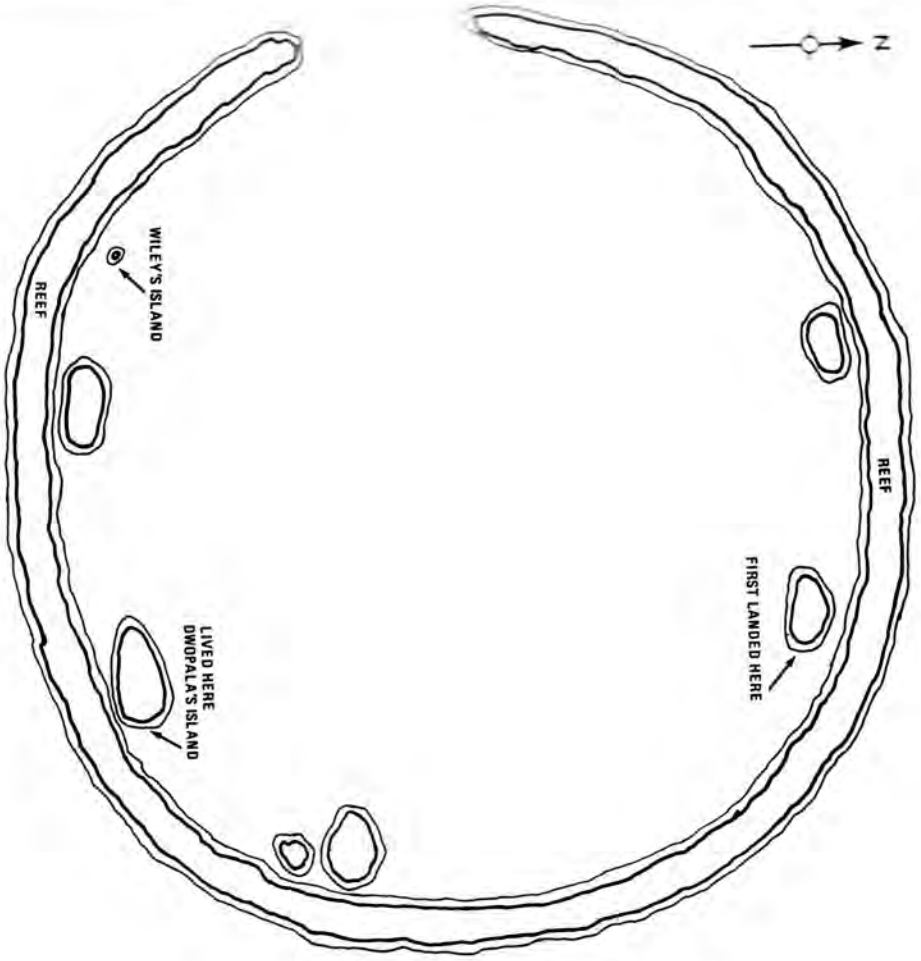
It was still dark when I became aware of two men talking in their native tongue. One was striking matches and holding them up in order to see me. One said, "You Merican?" I answered "Yes". Then the question "You come Airplane?". Again I answered "Yes". Then they held an animated conversation between themselves. Then again came the same two questions which I answered again and then more conversation between them. Then one said, "Me-n-you pella go long nudder island, see Peeta". I asked "Is Peeta American?". They answered "No". Then I asked, "What is Peeta?". Their answer was "Peeta Trader". I tried further to find out what nationality Peeta was, but was unable to communicate well enough to find out.

Shortly after sun up, I was loaded, boat and all on an outrigger canoe. The main part of the canoe was formed from a log about 12 feet long but only 2 feet wide near the center. Some wood poles were tied to the main part and ran off to one side where a piece of wood formed a pontoon to keep the canoe upright. My boat was placed on the wood poles that formed a sort of platform on their way out to the "outrigger". Four natives, at first using poles and then paddles set out for what was apparently another similar island across the Lagoon. As we traveled I got additional questions of the same nature and answered them best I could.

Also as we traveled I could see that we were crossing a truly beautiful lagoon that appeared to be totally surrounded by a circular reef that was high enough to make a very quiet harbor inside. The water was very calm inside the reef. There were no swells or whitecaps. I could also see about six islands near the outer edges of the lagoon. I judged the lagoon to

A sketch of a typical outrigger canoe. The Natives made these from materials found on their islands and used them for fishing and transportation between and around the islands. They were made in sizes from very small that would barely carry one adult to some quite large that could carry up to ten persons. The small ones were not very stable and upsets were very common. Getting dunked in the warm salt water was not a problem and getting back in and bailing out was easy. Fishing trips with the boys usually resulted in a swim or two.





A map of the lagoon and islands drawn from memory. The lagoon was about seven to ten miles across, and the seven islands were all located near the reef. WILEY's ISLAND was very small and only had two or three trees on it. At high tide it was hardly there but at low tide it was several acres.

be about 7 to 10 miles across and we were traveling almost directly across it. While enroute I was offered some dried fish to chew on and found it to be very tasty. I was also offered some green coconut milk to drink. It was just as good as the night before.

In about two hours we arrived and were greeted by 50 or so excited natives, and a small, barefoot, wiry, very tanned white man dressed in shorts and shirt. This was Peeta. I introduced myself in English and found that Peeta could not speak English. Worse than that, I found that I could communicate with the Natives better than I could with Peeta. He seemed, however, to be able to talk very well with the natives in their native tongue. I was carried (again boat and all) up a beautiful little beach, through some tall coconut palm trees to a small building constructed of rusty galvanized steel. I was taken out of the boat for the first time and the boat was turned up on its side and taken through a door to the inside. I too was carried inside and placed again in the boat, this time on a concrete floor. I was given a pillow for my head. I was in, what appeared to be a small living room of a 3 or 4 room building. The boat took up about one third of the room. The natives and Peeta apparently felt that the bottom of the boat was as soft and comfortable as the inflated sides that surrounded it. It was not, of course, and I was laying on concrete with a only the rubberized canvas that formed the boat bottom in between. I found that I was very tired so was content to lay there.

Then began a routine that was to follow for several days. This small room had several windows and an outside door. These windows and the door were filled with natives looking at me and asking questions. The pattern was, a question that I could answer and then a discussion of several minutes among themselves followed by another question to me and another discussion. Essentially the same questions were asked

over and over again. I began to get acquainted with them and tried to associate faces with names. I remember finding that this was difficult. They were quite similar in appearance and all (men and women) wore the same hair do.

Shortly after I got there, a man was introduced to me as the doctor. He looked at my wounds and left. He soon returned with some gauze and a brown bottle. All of the wounds that I had received were healed except for the large wound in the thigh. He washed it with a liquid from the brown bottle and bandaged it. That evening he came again and performed the same service except that he used the same gauze for the bandage. I guessed that the liquid was hydrogen peroxide. It was old and would no longer fizz when applied to the wound.

During the first week I began to gain strength and to learn to communicate with the people that continued to fill the windows. I was also beginning to get acquainted with some of them.

The older man (guess he was 55) that was striking the matches to look at me and who came to see me each day was named "Dwopala". He was the overall Chief of all the Islands. The man they called "Peeta" was a Trader and had a storeroom at one end of his building. He sold, such things as cloth, fish hooks, machetes, and pots to the natives. Apparently a trading ship would come by at some interval to buy Copra and re-supply Peeta's store. I began to understand that his real name was Peter which the natives pronounced Peeta. I found it interesting to speculate as to why he was there. From his mannerisms and accent when he talked to the natives, I believe he was German.

I continued the task of trying to associate faces with names. The boys were easy. They were there all the time so that I had more of an opportunity to get to know them. The Doctor and Dwopala were also easy as

they were there each day. The men that only showed up once or twice were impossible. The young women were also a puzzle. They were there often, most carrying a baby. I remember that I thought I had one pin pointed because I was able to associate her with a cute, probably 1 year old girl which helped herself to the readily available lunch while they were there. The next day I swore that the same young mother was there with a different child. I was confused. A few days later the young mother cleared up my problem by showing up with both children and nursing them both. Seems that babysitting was a normal chore quite often exchanged by the young mothers. Feeding the youngsters was a part of the babysitting.

Learning to communicate with the natives was another chore that I started. This turned out to be also troublesome until I began to figure it out. When the natives spoke to me I assumed that they were speaking in a mixture of English and their Native Language. For example: One day I asked where Peeta was as I needed him to arrange for someone to help me with my bathroom chores. He normally had one of the native boys help me but he was not there. One of the boys ran out and then came back to tell me "Him ki ki Banan". Shortly Peeta came in eating a ripe banana. Aha! ki ki means eat in Native. I was to learn later that this was not the case. Ki ki was the word in Pidgin English for eat. Pidgin English was a combination of English, Native and other languages. If I was to learn to communicate better I would need to learn their Native language and Pidgin English. It would be a continuing problem for me as different Natives had differing skills in using Pidgin. One could converse very well, the next hardly at all. Within the first week I was surprised by a young man who had opened and then handed me a green coconut. Without thinking, I said, "Thank You" and he replied in excellent English "Your Welcome".

I grabbed this opportunity to try to find out where I was and how I could get back to allied territory. He explained that we were near the bigger Islands of Buka and Bouganville. He had spent several years on Buka with the Missionaries that came at regular times to these islands. He lived on one of the other islands (the one due west) and had paddled over to see me. The missionaries and the trading ship had stopped coming so they guessed something was going on. I explained about the war to him. Knowing that we were near Buka and Bouganville didn't mean a thing to me. I tried to find out how far it was to Australia or Guadalcanal, but to no avail. I remembered how on our first few cruises, that I had kept track of where we were on a chart. How I wished I had a chart with our last position noted. I asked if any books or newspapers were available, but the only thing was a year old newspaper from Australia. It did not contain any maps of the area.

I was given two meals a day and all the coconut milk I wanted. I had asked for some water to drink and was furnished some rather bad tasting warm water. I drank it recognizing that the green coconut milk would shortly make itself known. The meals were prepared by a native boy of about 16 years of age. He apparently worked for Peeta, doing his cooking and other chores. A very nice young man. (I cannot remember his name now). I also had ripe bananas for snacks. Our meals were one dish affairs consisting of boiled chicken, baked fish, boiled green bananas, boiled mashed bread fruit, or boiled taro roots. Never two things at once. All single dish meals.

During the second day I finally felt the urge to urinate. It was a small amount but during the following days this function seemed to return to normal. It was probably 5 days before I had my first bowel movement. I kept thinking it was strange that the green coconut milk hadn't done it's thing. I also remember being concerned that I had drank so much to

begin with. What ever I had done was apparently just the right thing, because my habits returned to somewhat normal with only a day or two of gas problems and some growling. I said somewhat normal for the following reason. This first movement and all the time I was to be on the Island, the results were quite soft and were almost white in color. I was at first startled but soon became accustomed to it.

On several occasions I tried to get Peeta and the Natives to turn the boat over, because I thought the bottom would form a sort of hammock when supported by the sides. I was not sure it would work but I wanted to try it. I was so excited the day my English Speaking friend was there that I forgot to ask him to arrange for it. I could not make them understand, so I continued to lay or sit on the concrete floor. It was uncomfortable at times but was really not to bad.

As each day went by, I spent more time sitting up and less laying down. When I sat up I could look out the door and see some native houses about a half a block from Peeta's. There was a group of about five houses. I could see that they were constructed of some type of grass or leaves. The women would do their cooking over a small fire out in front of the house. There were also racks that held some fish nets. I remember thinking that I would be glad to get up an around so that I could go visit these houses and see how they were made and how the people lived.

I continued to keep my calendar on the side of the boat. I asked if there was some paper I could use for this purpose, but none was available. During my bathroom chores, I was furnished a roll of toilet paper that was marked for use in septic tanks. It was a very smooth paper and was sturdy enough for writing on. I asked Peeta if I could have some for writing and was furnished a small roll for that purpose. It worked very well, so I transferred my calendar keeping chores to paper.

This sketch attempts to show the construction of the Native houses. They were constructed of poles, bamboo and leaves. All the houses on the islands were made this way but did vary in size. Dwopala's was slightly larger than most. Cooking was done over a small fire generally just under the eves of the porch. This prevented sudden showers from delaying dinner.

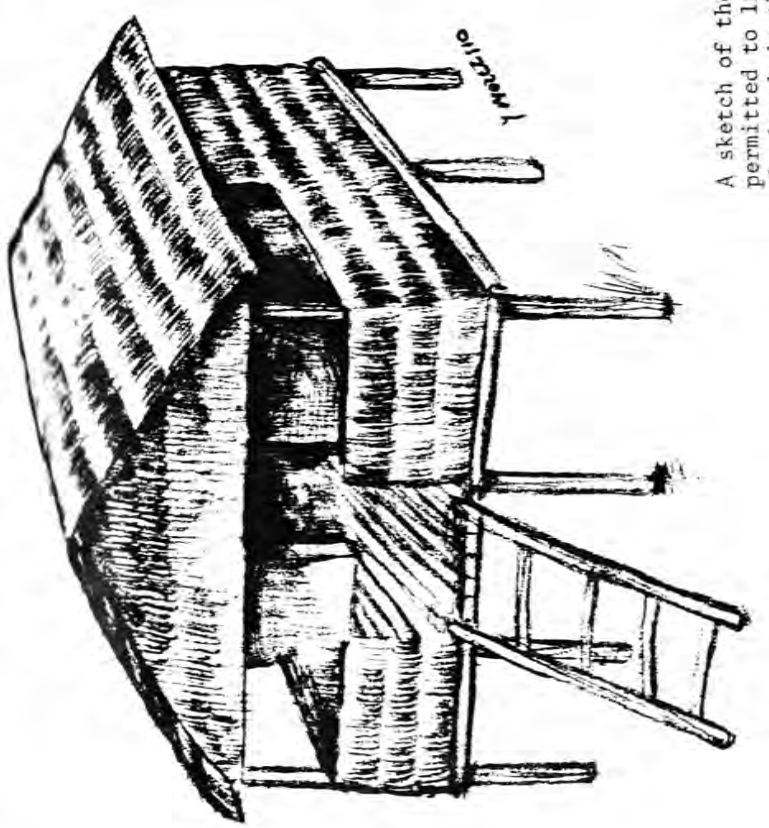
13 - ISLAND LIFE (AS I REMEMBER)

After about one week with Peeta, some native men came and told me they were going to move me. I was picked up this time by two men while a couple of others picked up the boat and I was carried about two blocks distance to an area that had a very large grass building and a smaller one very near the beach. The smaller one was up on poles with a wood floor about 4 feet off the ground. I was told that the large building was the church and the small house was there for the missionaries. My boat was placed in the small building and this time I was able to convince them to put it upside down. I was placed on it and it was quite comfortable. Once again I found myself very tired. I asked why I was moved and was told that Peeta did not want me any longer.

I was at first upset that Peeta did not want me, but this did not last long as I immediately recognized that it was the natives that took care of me and talked to me. About the only thing Peeta had offered was the concrete floor for me to lay on. I also recognized that my being there was quite an imposition as the natives were always there in some numbers.

My new little residence consisted of one room (no windows) about 10 ft by 10 ft with an opening out to a porch that was perhaps 10 ft by 5 ft. There was no door over the opening. The porch was enclosed about 3 ft up and then was open up to the roof. An opening with about four steps led down to the church yard or beach. After you went down the steps, the lagoon was (depending on the tide), about 20 yards to the left and the church about 60 yards to the right. Straight ahead across the church yard were two of the typical native houses.

The natives continued to care for me, bringing me two meals a day and the doctor showed up at least once a day to care for my thigh. He soon exhausted the supply of liquid in his brown bottle, so after that,



A sketch of the house that I was permitted to live in. It was near the beach in the Church yard and was for the use of the missionaries when they were visiting. The purpose for putting it up on poles was to reduce the insect problem. Flies in particular, stayed near the ground.

he would wash the wound in coconut milk poured directly from a coconut. He would wash the bandage in ocean water and replace it over the wound. As he continued to care for the wound we could see that it was begining to form scar tissue all around the edges. We hoped that this would continue and that shortly it would heal across. It had an opening about 3 inches long by 1 1/2 inches wide.

Each day I continued to gain strength and I finally decided to test my leg. I found that I could walk and was able to walk down the steps, down by the beach and to the nearby houses. I was surprised to find that my thigh worked fine if I kept my leg straight. My right ankle, however, was painful. My clothes were a bit funny looking. I had a shirt that I was still wearing, my shoes were hard as boards from the salt water so I went barefoot, my pants had one good leg down to my ankle, but the other pants leg was cut off above the thigh wound. While in the boat, I had cut the pants leg away in order to better examine the wounds and to be able to expose them to the sun. I had had a pair of undershorts, but Dwopala had misunderstood and thought I gave them to him. He would wear them quite proudly some days in place of his cloth. One of the native men volunteered to cut the long trouser leg off about knee length and sew it on where the other pant leg was. This would give me a pair of pants with both legs about knee length. I borrowed a cloth from him to wear while he performed this tailoring job.

I went walking each day and set a goal of hiking around the island. Each day my leg worked better and the ankle became less painful. Everywhere I went I was accompanied by the boys. They were my constant but very welcome companions.

The natives who had welcomed me to their island and that were caring for me, were to me, very interesting people. In grade school, I had studied geography and

knew about Eskimos and the peoples of Arabia and Africa, but not these people. They were darker than the Polynesians I had seen on Tongatabu and in Hawaii. They were lighter than the Blacks I had encountered in the States. Their skin was quite dark yet had a copper glow to it. Their hair was not curly like the blacks back home. It could only be described as fuzzy. Both men and women wore their hair in the same way. They were shaved to about one inch above the ear and then the hair was cut so as to be shaped like a legionaires cap only much higher. The older men tended to bald on top so they wore theirs slightly different. Shaped more like a fez. Their noses were very flat and when they smiled they exposed all their teeth and some of their gums. They smiled and laughed a lot. They seemed to me to be a very happy people.

They wore only the cloth around their middles. The girls wore theirs shorter than the men. The men's were about knee length, the girl's about half way between the knees and the waist. The small children (under five) wore nothing. If you think about it, this was very handy for the untrained. Going to the bathroom was no problem for them.

They were of course barefoot. Their feet were very large and had callouses on the bottoms that were as thick as the sole of a tennis shoe. They could walk or run over rocks and sharp coral with out difficulty. Their skin, that was always exposed to the elements seemed to be tough. The boys had developed callouses on their stomachs and chest from climbing coconut trees and sliding down. On warm days when we would lie on the beach, when I got up, the very fine sand would stick to me and would resist my being able to brush it off. The natives had no difficulty at all, as the sand would just fall off their toughened skin.

Most of the girls had a hole through their noses and occasionally would wear a short bone through it. Most of them also had attempted to pierce their ears and

then to stretch the skin into a loop. I don't know why they tried this as most of them broke and left two strings of skin hanging down. They also would decorate their skin by burning spots on their skin and causing it to get infected so that when it healed it formed a bump. Those who were very decorated had these bumps in rows up and down their arms and across their backs.

The men appeared to have very light beards and were always clean shaven. Their teeth were black. They would quite often be seen chewing on some type of weed or nut that they dipped in a white powder they called "kabong". This combination turned their saliva a bright red. They chewed and spit like the tobacco chewing ball players back home. My visits with Dwopala allowed me to determine that this material gave them "a high". As Dwopala first put it, "All same drinkum liniment." As in many of our conversations, I did not understand the word liniment. After some questions and answers I understood that at times the natives would get hold of some type of liniment that had alcohol in it and would imbibe. Some women also chewed but most did not. It soon became apparent to me that those that chewed had black teeth and those that did not had white teeth.

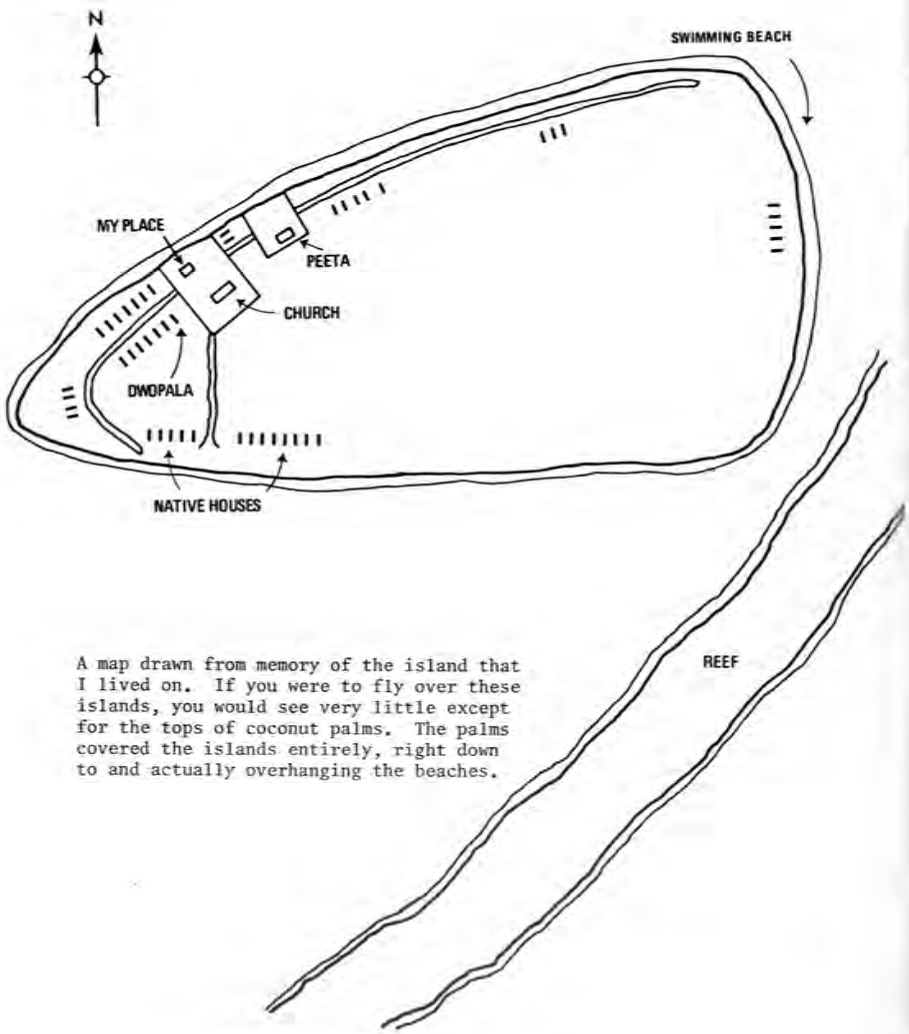
There were about 100 (my guess) people on the island on which I was staying. I would guess that there were 70 women and girls and only about 30 men. I noticed that of the men, they were all 35 years of age or over. I was to find out that all the men between, perhaps 20 and 35 were on Buka working on plantations. The Chief had two children. A pre-teen girl and a son who was on Buka. His daughter-in-law was there and had two children.

There were about six pre-teen boys that were my constant companions. There were also about six pre-teen girls and they also joined us at times. The girls, however, were required to work at the various

chores, but the boys (and I) were free to play all day.

My first walks to their houses revealed that they lived as families in small houses made entirely of materials that grew on the island. A frame of wood poles was constructed, and then a number of the large center parts of coconut palm branches were leaned against this frame and tied to it. This formed a quonset hut shaped house. Then leaves were placed around bamboo poles to form large shingles and these were tied to the palm branches and overlapped to make a water proof roof that extended from the top to the ground. The ends were walled off using mats made by taking a palm leaf and bending and weaving the two sides together. The houses were barely tall enough to stand up inside at the center. They had only a single room with sand carried up from the beach, on the floor. This single room was used for sleeping and for storing some belongings. They slept directly on the sandy floor. Some houses also had a rack for smoke/drying fish. This rack was placed inside so as to protect it from the wind. Also by having it inside, they could dry fish and ward off insects with the same smoky fire.

The houses were constructed so as to leave about one third or more of the roof area to form a porch in front. This area was used as a kitchen. Cooking (or I should say boiling) was done in a small cast iron pot that was hung from a stick that was placed in the ground at an angle, and over an open but small fire. Everything that was cooked was boiled except for fish. The fish were prepared by gutting and then placing the fish, head scales and all directly on the coals of a burned down fire. The gutting of the fish took place right after catching. They did not use a knife. The natives could gut the fish by using their tough thumb nail and just ripping out the innards.



A map drawn from memory of the island that I lived on. If you were to fly over these islands, you would see very little except for the tops of coconut palms. The palms covered the islands entirely, right down to and actually overhanging the beaches.

13 - ISLAND LIFE (AS I REMEMBER)

When I had first arrived I noticed that whenever the natives were to take a drink or eat something, they would make the sign of the cross beforehand. When they first talked to me about the missionaries that came by, I was sure that they would be Catholic. In addition to crossing themselves prior to eating and drinking, the natives attended a church session each morning and each evening. My house was, of course, right by the church. These meetings were of about 15 minutes duration and consisted of recitations and singing in the native language. The church sessions were led by Thomas. Thomas was a native trained by the missionaries to perform this function. Thomas and I were to have a number of visits and I learned that he was not a native of these islands, but rather his home was on Buka. He was married and had two children. They lived on the other side of the island, but only about three blocks from the church.

My first hike all the way around the island was accomplished easily one morning. I had over estimated the distance. The ever present boys and I started the hike early in the morning and began our walk to go around in a counter clockwise direction. As we left my house, we first walked by the group of houses near Dwopala's. Continuing we came to a point of the island that was farthest from the reef. We then began walking up the far side of the island and found another grouping of houses, including Thomas' near the beach opposite the church yard. Walking along we soon left the house area and found that as we got closer to the reef, the beach became somewhat steeper and narrower. Also the beach seemed to be undergoing some erosion as the palm trees were growing closer to the water and some actually had some erosion around their roots. Hermit crabs abounded on this beach. The boys helped me to find some that were in colorful shells and showed me how to remove the crab. They used two methods. One was to blow gently on the crab and it would start to come out of its shell. They would then grab it and pull gently until it was entirely out.

The second method used the sound of their voices to entice the crab to start out. They sorta went "lub-lub-lub" gently. I made a small collection and put them in my pocket. I thought that this would be a nice souvenir for my sisters, if I ever got home.

Continuing our walk up this narrow beach (only about 20 feet wide), we soon came to another point. This one was very near the reef. I remember walking up the beach to a high point and looking out at the dark blue of the open ocean and seeing closely again, the huge swells and the white caps. I found that I felt afraid and was very glad to be on the island.

Rounding the point, we found ourselves walking somewhat parallel to, but slightly away from the reef. A short walk and we came to another point. Rounding this point, we started down a beach that took us directly away from the reef. We were shortly back to the church yard.

From this walk I could see that the island was shaped somewhat like a bloated triangle. The church and my place were near the end that was farthest from the reef and on the side that faced the lagoon.

The island was probably less than five miles at the most all the way around. It appeared that this triangle had two sides of about two miles each and one side of less than one mile.

It was an absolutely beautiful little island. White sandy beaches all the way around. There was of course no surf on the beaches. The surf and ocean waves were expended against the surrounding reef.

In the center of the Island was a sort of jungle. The natives called it bush. In the bush were coconut palms, several varieties of banana trees, bread fruit trees, papaya trees and taro plants. I went into the bush several times with Dwopala in order to harvest

coconuts, bananas, etc. On my first trip, his pre-teen daughter went with us. As we walked along a path I asked Dwopala which part of the bush was his. He answered by pointing to different trees and telling me who they belonged to. Apparently, each family owned certain trees. It was apparent that they did not own land, only trees. I was not able to understand how they kept it all straight. After a short walk, Dwopala selected a coconut tree, climbed up to the coconuts and threw down about a dozen. He then climbed down, husked the coconuts and left just enough husk to tie them together. He then helped his daughter load them on her back and we walked back to his house with his daughter walking about ten steps behind. The women always walked about ten steps behind their husbands. If we went after bananas, then the daughter would hoist them up and carry them back. While in the bush, I asked Dwopala if any one could come into the bush and get anything they wanted. He told me no, he could take fruit only from his trees.

There were four varieties of bananas. The most plentiful was about the size and shape of bananas that we could get back home. This type was generally prepared for eating by boiling the green hard fruit in their skins and then peeling and eating them. They were bland tasting, not too different from a potato boiled without salt or any flavoring. They would sometimes ripen this type banana by picking it green and burying it in the sand for several days. The skin color remained green, but they tasted very much like the yellow bananas that we could get back home.

A second variety was much shorter than the first one and had a very thick skin. This one was generally eaten after ripening. This was my favorite. It had an orange meat and was very sweet and very tasty.

A third variety was quite small (about the size of your thumb) and it too was generally eaten after

ripening. The very thin skin of this one turned yellow when ripe. It was quite like our back home type in taste, only sweeter.

The fourth variety was very scarce. It was much like the second variety described above, only it was very large. I never did get to taste one of these. I can guess that it was very good as it was considered "Taboo" for the women to eat.

The bread fruit was the only seasonal fruit. It was in season when I arrived and I had some during the first part of my stay. It also was prepared by boiling and it too had a bland taste. It grew on large trees and was shaped like a large grapefruit. The taro was dug up and like the rest was prepared by boiling. On occasions it was first boiled and then wrapped in banana tree leaves and baked by burying it under ground and building a fire on top. Firewood was a very scarce item on the island so this method of cooking was reserved for celebrations.

As my thigh healed and I could get around better and as the natives began to get used to my being there, I found that each day only the boys were hanging around. The boys and I found several ways to entertain ourselves.

First of course was talking. We talked endlessly while I worked at learning their language and they worked at improving their abilities at Pidgin and with English. My efforts to get them to speak English was hampered in that they were unable to understand how to put the words into sentences. Grammer as we know it was impossible for them. I recognized that what they could use the most was a working knowledge of Pidgin. So I worked mostly with them teaching them English words and allowing them to use the words by substituting them in their own language or in Pidgin. The thing we accomplished most was to allow them to learn and to use each day, the Pidgin language. We

got pretty good at communicating with each other.

A couple of examples of Pidgin vs the Native language, will be interesting and will illustrate the difficulties we had.

English: Good bye
Pidgin: You stop me go
Native: La tol la va (La means you or me, tol= stop, va= go).

English: Good night
Pidgin: You sleep me go
Native: Soho tol la va (Soho means sleep, tol= stop, la= me, va= go).

English: He is eating a banana
Pidgin: Him ki-ki banan
Native: Le neum oposo (Le= him, neum= eat, oposo= banana)

English: Give me that fish, my bird hasn't eaten yet.
Pidgin: Gimmie fish, kanack-anack blong me no ki-ki.
Native: Milo dots cancan, its kanack-anack atater connie susnisunun manuni

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English: Let's get in a canoe and paddle over to that other island.
Pidgin: You n me pella go long canoe long nudder island.
Native: "NOTE: I never got this far"

English: We have some bananas growing on the island
Pidgin: Plenty too much banan long island blong me pella.

English: Wiley's Island
Pidgin: Island Blong Wiley

I also had to learn to contend with the problem that when the natives did not understand what you said, they would never ask you to repeat or to say that they did not understand. They always said "yes". It took me months to realize this. I had a lot of confusing times where I thought I had communicated but had not. I finally solved this puzzle when one of the men had invited me to go fishing and as I was trying to find out when, I asked if we were going fishing before church or after church and his answer was yes.

While the boys and I sat and visited, how I yearned for some one to come by that could visit with me in real English and to tell me what was happening in that big world out there. The bouts of homesickness I had experienced since first leaving home continued and I had some very miserable days. The palm trees in the front yard of my little grass shack, and the beautiful beach were very nice, but I was always ready to trade them for the two old Boxelder trees and dusty back yard of home. The homesickness was almost overwhelming after dark and the boys had left, and I was all alone. I would sometimes walk out front of my house and stand in the warm tropical night, (barefoot and without a shirt) to look at the moon and realize that it was the same moon that was shining down on a cold winter scene back home; then tell myself that it

is the same moon and that home is closer than it seems. In some way this helped.

One of our favorite pastimes was swimming. The best beach for swimming was the short beach near the reef. It was the only beach that had water that was deep enough for swimming. It also had a sandy bottom. On very warm days we would hike up to that beach and jump in for a swim. There was always a current that swept by. We would walk up the beach a ways and swim out and while we were swimming, the current would carry us down toward the point of the island and we would then swim back in.

Another pastime was fishing. Several of the boys had captured young birds that required a daily feeding of small fish. These birds (called Kanack-anack by the natives) were about the size of a robin, all black except for a white patch on their forehead and had small webbed feet. The boys would catch a young one and then keep it as a pet and feed it fish every day. As the bird grew, they would train it to fly to them to get their fish. They had no cages so eventually the bird would return to the bush. There were several ways to catch some of the many very colorful small fish that lived in the lagoon. One way was with a pole and line with a very small hook. For bait they used hermit crabs or small clams. This kind of fishing called for the use of a canoe to pole out to a likely spot. Most any shallow spot over coral was a likely spot. The hook was baited and lowered down toward the coral. Hundreds of the many colored fish could be seen swimming among the coral formations. The trick to catching the little fish was to jerk the line at the right time. Not too difficult as you could see down to the hook and see exactly what was going on. This was my favorite method as I never tired of looking at the coral formations at the bottom of the lagoon. We had to be careful not to overturn the canoe and stick a foot into one of the giant clams that were very numerous. I stuck a pole in one on

several occasions to see just how strong they were. They were very powerful. They didn't like wood so would let loose.

Another method of catching small fish was to take the shell of a small "giant" clam that was about 12" long and tie it closed. Then we would break a small opening near the top. Next we would find some small clams and crush them and place them inside the shell. Now we would stand in shallow water, being careful to pick a safe spot, and place the baited shell on the bottom. A short wait and one or more small fish would swim inside and we would then dive down, put our hand over the hole and lift the shell out of the water. Lunch for the "Kanack-anack"

Also on the island, but quite scarce was a similar bird that was all white. Early one day several of the boys came by and were all excited. They had found and caught one of the baby birds of the white variety. They had decided that I was white so that it should be mine to raise. So I joined them in raising a bird. I found a piece of sheet metal that was about one foot square. I suspended it from the roof of my porch with strings from each corner. This or some similar arrangement was necessary so as to protect it from the rats that frequented the island. Later I made a perch by tying a short stick across a long stick and sticking it in the ground out in front of the house. It spent its days on the perch in the yard and the nights on the porch. I went fishing each day so I could feed it and to the delight of the boys, as it got larger, it learned to fly out to me to get its fish. Then one day, it was gone.

Dwopala never failed to check up on me each day. As time went on, I recognized this and tried to go by his house each morning so that he could see me. He was about 55 or 60 years old. His hair was thin on top and was turning gray. He was close to being toothless and in front he only had two teeth and these did not

meet. He always had a ready smile. We visited many times and I learned more about him than any of the other men on the island. He was Chief of all the islands and he was Chief because his father before him was Chief. Some day his son would be Chief. Each of the other five islands had a Chief. Dwopala was Chief of this Island as well as overall Chief.

I was able to find out that he received no pay for being Chief. Neither did the Doctor or the Church Head. Most of the men had specific skills that they were called upon to use from time to time. Their only reward was that of being recognized for that skill.

I noticed that he did not attend church. I asked him about this and he told me that he was not allowed to belong as he had been married before. His first wife was still living and had a house about two blocks away. Dwopala took care of her need of food. His son was by his first wife and his daughter was by the second.

I was interested in fishing and how they went about it, so I asked Dwopala to take me along. The natives used several methods of fishing.

The first method was with fish lines and hooks. His wife would be sent out to get squid for bait. She would get this by taking a canoe out to the reef at low tide and finding and catching by hand, some small squid. Fishing with hooks always was an evening task, for some reason unknown to me. We would paddle out to a likely spot, bait the hooks, throw out the lines and wait. We did not use poles, just held the lines in our hands. We never went out without catching six to twelve nice fish. Like all fishing there was sometimes some excitement. One evening Dwopala was sitting calmly in the canoe when I suddenly heard the line being pulled through his hands. He finally got it stopped and after much pulling we were able to get a shark about 3 to 4 foot long in the canoe.

Fortunately we had Dwopala's big canoe so that we had room for it. He killed it by stabbing it and we threw it back after removing the precious hook.

My favorite memory of Dwopala, and a picture I would like to have, was one evening as we were sitting in his canoe fishing, the canoe drifted around so that Dwopala was between me and the island. That evening he had worn a necklace made of a green fern around his neck. There he sat in his faded red cloth, smiling his almost toothless smile with the beauty of the lagoon and his island bathed in the late afternoon sun, in the background.

There were two methods of fishing that used nets. I should first describe the nets and how they were made. They were what you would expect as fish nets with some light wood floats at the top and some sea shells at the bottom as weights. The distance from top to bottom was about four feet and they were about twenty feet long. They were made by the women entirely of materials available on the island. Under the bark of the breadfruit tree was a thin fibrous paper thin layer. This material was harvested, dried and then the women would first make string by rolling the material between their hands and the top of their thighs. They would first make thread size string by rolling the material and then by rolling two or three of the thread size strings together they made the net sized string. After the string was made they would then use it to make nets. Their method of making the nets used a small piece of wood to gain uniform hole size and they worked at net making in a manner not to different from crocheting in that they worked from a very large ball of string without having to pass the ball of string through the holes.

One method of net fishing called for the man and his wife to wade out into a shallow part of the lagoon. They would then string the net into a semi-circle and then by running around they could chase fish into it.

They would run by lifting their feet clear of the water and then stepping down. After fish were chased into the net, they would catch them in their hands.

Another method required finding an area that was sandy on the bottom. Again the net was strung in a semi-circle and the canoe was paddled around and the water was slapped with paddles to drive the fish into the net. On my first trip for this type of fishing everything was going well until suddenly Dwopala fell out of the canoe. I was left in the canoe all alone. When he didn't come up right away I got ready to jump in after him and as I looked down, I saw that he was down at the net with one fish in his mouth, gripping it just behind the head, one in one hand and he was swimming toward a third. Shortly he surfaced and threw three fish in the canoe and went back down for more. The part that startled me was the part where he just seemed to fall in. The natives never did the pretty little dives you expect. When it came time to go in the water it was just "fall in".

Spear Fishing was another method, however it was more of a recreation than a means for obtaining food. There were about four boys on the island in the 16 - 18 year category. They had what appeared to be some home made goggles. They were carved out of wood and could be fit in each eye socket and tied around their heads. There was a small clear glass lens fastened in the center. Their spears were a short piece of wood with a sharpened piece of steel rod tied to it. We would paddle out to one of the many areas in the lagoon that had a sandy bottom at a depth of 20 to 30 feet. These sandy areas were surrounded by coral formations that rose out of the sand like mountains out of a flat desert. The coral formations were full of giant clams to be wary of, and caves and valleys that the fish could hide in.

The boys were excellent swimmers. They would fall out of the canoe and dive down, kicking their large feet

in a bicycle riding motion, (not a scissor kick). They had good lung capacity and could stay down for minutes. I would go in the water with them but I could not dive down without exhaling practically all my breath in order to not float in the salt water, so had very poor luck spearing fish. Also the bridge of my nose caused the two parts of the goggles to set at angles to each other such that underwater, I had double vision. I spent my time swimming around near the surface with one eye closed enjoying the incredible underwater beauty of the lagoon. I could not get enough of looking at the coral formations and the many many small tropical fish that swam around them.

The boys always got some fish. One kind they looked for, was a porcupine fish that could inflate itself and present sharp spines to any adversary. They did not eat this fish to my knowledge, but it had an internal part that resembled a large fat turkey wishbone. When removed and dried it was a rubbery thing that the boys used in a game of, what I called "Foot Hockey". This soccer ball or hockey puck would last for about three days of playing before becoming so rancid that the boys could no longer stand to play with it.

The Foot Hockey game was fun to watch. They would set up goals at each end of the church yard. The goals were simply two sticks stuck in the ground. They would then form two teams and try to kick the puck between the sticks. There seemed to be no rules and no out of bounds lines. I remember them kicking at the puck out in the water one particular day. That was farther from the goals than the goals were from each other.

Watching their game, I thought about teaching them some other games. I recognized that whatever I taught them should have no rules or scores. I tried to teach them to play tag. The game was to use a safe base and

one person to be it. The first time they tried it was after dark and two boys collided and suffered cut lips. I recognized it would be best if I not teach them something that might lead to injury.

One day both Thomas and Dwopala came to see me. They asked me if I would conduct a school for the boys and girls. I said I would be happy to try. So they went to work (men and women) and built a school house. It was made of poles and leaves just like a house only somewhat larger. Inside they made some low benches for the kids to sit on. I couldn't see where we needed a building as any place in the church yard would have been fine.

While they were putting up the building I considered what and how I might teach them. We had no books, no paper, no pencils, and no blackboard. We did have sticks and sand. I had one day, when I first arrived, asked Dwopala how old he was and he answered "ten". I knew that he was near fifty and concluded that ten was the largest number that he knew. I also recognized that he had no way of keeping track of his age. Anyway, it occurred to me that certainly I could teach the kids to count to numbers higher than 10. I also thought that I might teach them the ABC's and at least how to write their names and how to read some simple words. I also recognized that kids, other than the few boys that tagged after me, could make use of Pidgin English.

After the school house was finished, we started school. I was amazed to find that I had about 20 boys and girls. They ranged in age from 5 to 18. "But they were all in the First Grade". So we started out to learn to count. When we got to ten, I told them what an Indian was in America and taught them to sing "Ten Little Indians". It was slow going as most did not understand what I was telling them. We kept after it for about two hours a day, every day except Sunday. I was glad that we did accomplish, learning some

Pidgin and counting to 100. Some were able to learn some simple arithmetic and to write and recognize their names. For the writing lessons and practice, we would get some sticks and gather in the church yard. The sticks wrote fine in the sand and their large feet made excellent erasers.

One day during school, we heard some excited voices outside and learned that someone had seen a ship coming. We all ran or walked to the corner of the island that was closest to the reef and there we watched as a convoy of a dozen or more ships slowly went by. I was sure they were Japanese so was happy that they were just passing by.

Almost every day we would hear or see some airplanes. For the most part they would be very high or so far away as to make identification impossible. Occasionally, one would be close enough to recognize as Japanese. As my days on the island wore on, I became aware that we were seeing more and more airplanes. Then one day I saw one with a big beautiful White Star on it. From that day on, I never went anywhere without my signal mirror in my back pocket. I also began to keep track on my calendar, how many airplanes I saw and how many of them were Japanese, American or "too far away". From this information I was able to recognize that I was seeing more and more planes in total, and that the ratio of American to Japanese planes was growing. This was important, as it was my only means of determining that our side was making some progress.

I had a number of interesting visits with Dwopala on the days I stopped by his house. He had a coconut log near the front of his house so I was able to sit on it as we visited.

On one of these visits after I had begun to gain some weight, he startled me by pinching the calf of my leg and saying, "When you-n-me pella eat nudder pella,

this fat to much." What he had really said to me was, "When we were cannibals, we found this part of the leg to be very fat." Further visiting with him revealed to me that when he was young and some one was killed by falling out of a tree, they would not allow the food to be wasted. He also talked about staging fights between some of the young men. They would use clubs that were highly decorated. He showed me his club. It was quite heavy and was about four feet long. It was shaped a little like a paddle at the end in order to have sharpness. My understanding of the happenings that he described, was that the fights were staged and the loser devoured in a celebration. It was hard for me to believe that these gentle people could do this, but I was convinced that I was visiting with an ex-cannibal.

On several of our fishing trips I had noticed that there was a very small island on the far side of the island that was almost directly west of the one that I was staying on. It was hidden from our view except when we were out in the canoes. It was very small and appeared to have only two or three trees on it. I asked Dwopala who owned the island and he told me it was his. All the islands were his. It occurred to me that it would be fun to be able to tell the folks back home that I owned an island in the South Pacific. That is if I ever got back. So I asked Dwopala to give me the island. He did. It was verbally only of course, but he understood what he was doing. It was my island. In talking with the boys later I told them about this and from that time on, whenever we were out fishing so that we could see the island, we would point and say "Island blong Wiley".

The islands had flies, mosquitos and a small gnat that the natives called "moon flies". The moon flies were bothersome but were only out on still nights and when the moon was out. No moon, no gnats. They were a swarming, fly up your nose, in your ears and bite you type problem. My little house up on stilts was

reasonably free of insects. (that's why it was elevated) The natives used a smokey fire inside their houses to ward them off. The flies and mosquitos were really not to bad, but they were there.

I always had mosquito bites on me. One day I noticed one was itching more than usual on my right foot. As I scratched it I noticed that it was infected and draining. My awareness to this bite increased each day as it seemed to grow larger and drain more. Also the flies were attracted to it. Then one showed up on my left foot. Then another and another. They became open sores as they grew and drained more. I went to Dwopala and the Doctor with my feet but they could offer no help. I soon had more than a dozen on my feet. I was also concerned in that one woman on the island seemed to have open sores over most of her body to the extent that as they did heal she had become crippled by the scars of healing. She could not straighten out her left elbow or walk upright. I wondered if this was what I was beginning to have.

One day more excitement as some one had noticed a fairly large tree had drifted into the reef. The men went out and managed to get it over the reef and onto the island. This was a real find, as firewood was a very scarce item on the island. The natives burned all kinds of things including coconut husks to cook their meals. Coconut husks would burn poorly but would burn if some wood was burned along side them.

The tree was dried and made into firewood. Then a few days later I noticed the men were out gathering live coral and hauling it into the church yard. After they had a good sized pile, they built a fire with some of their new found fire wood and put the coral on it. They kept the fire going most of the day. Late in the day they removed the coral from the ashes, broke it into smaller pieces and wrapped it in banana leaves. The coral now was white in color. They dug a shallow pit and placed the wrapped coral in the bottom and

covered it with sand. They then built another fire on top and kept it going most of the night. The next morning, they uncovered and unwrapped the coral and I saw that they had the white powder they called "kabong". There were some pieces of coral that did not turn to powder. These were picked out and discarded. The men now had a good supply of kabong.

As I watched this operation, I wondered if this powder had any medicinal value. I recognized that it came from the salt water and I remembered that Iodine came from seaweed. So I talked Dwopala into giving me some to try on my feet. He gave me some and I went to my house to try this out.

I wetted a tooth pick sized stick and picked up some kabong on it and applied it to one of my sores. It burned like crazy. So does Iodine, I thought. I endured the pain and kept adding the powder to the one sore. I noticed that the powder actually enlarged the sore, but as I kept at it, it seemed to burn less. After what I remember being an hour of adding powder and waiting for the pain to subside, I had one sore covered and slowly the burning ceased. The kabong hardened and formed a scab. One was enough for one day. As I walked down the steps to take a breather, I was met with the usual bunch of flies swarming to my feet. I was elated when I noticed they did not touch the one with the kabong scab. The next day, I treated two more with the same results. The next day I got several more and within a week, I had them all covered. I showed the results to Dwopala and the Doctor. A few weeks later the scabs began coming off, and my feet were well. Where each sore had been, I had a round purple scar.

On my many walks about the island, I ran into Peeta many times. We would speak briefly and were always on friendly but distant terms. He didn't bother me and I never tried to bother him in any way. I went to his house to see him on a few occasions. On one of these

trips, I noticed that he had a hand cranked phonograph. I asked if he played it and he responded that it was broken. I asked if I could look at it and found that the problem was a broken spring. I remembered that I once had one back home and found that I could run it by hand by placing my finger on the record and spinning the turntable fast enough for the governor mechanism to control the speed. So I had Peeta get me a record and showed him how he could play the thing. He seemed pleased with this and put up with the boys for several days as we played several times through his small collection of records. Our favorite was "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum".

One of the natives also had a phonograph, and when he heard about this, he brought it to me and I showed him how he could again use it.

We had one wedding while I was there. One of the boys about 17, was married to a girl about 8. As a result of this wedding I was able to learn that their custom was that the men owned their wives and daughters. When a boy wanted to get married, he had to buy the girl. Mostly, the boy's father bought the girl for him. The wedding was a simple ceremony and not much was made of it.

On one of my walks, I noticed one of the Natives had a small pen and was raising 3 pigs. He was feeding them coconuts. One day I noticed the natives seemed more excited than usual and were gathering larger than normal amounts of food. When I asked what was going on, I learned that the man with the pigs was going to butcher one and had invited everyone to join him in a "BIG KIKI". I envisioned a Luau with roasted pig and all the trimmings. I was close. The natives dressed up in their best cloths and put flowers in their hair and made necklaces out of ferns and we had dancing etc. (The only flower that grew on these islands was a red hibiscus) Taro was boiled then wrapped in banana leaves and buried in sand for baking with a fire on

top. Extra bananas had been picked and buried a few days before for ripening. The pig was killed and prepared by cutting it up and placing it in pots for boiling. It was for them a big celebration.

A few days after the big kiki, I was visiting with Dwopala and ask him if they rendered the lard from the pig. I had visions of some fried fish or something. He said no. So I described to him in some detail, how the lard could be rendered and used in cooking. I do not know if they threw the fat away or if they used it in some manner. I also asked about the liver. He said they threw it away. So I told him that next time, they could cook and eat the liver and heart if they wanted to.

A few weeks later, the same man killed another pig and we had another BIG KIKI. During the day, they brought me a large piece of boiled liver to eat. It was not very good, but I ate it as I made a mental note to be more careful what I told Dwopala. Two days later, Dwopala asked me to stop by for some fried bananas. He had arranged to render some lard. So I went to his house and he brought out a container of lard, a shallow pan and some ripe bananas. We built a small fire and while it was burning down, I noticed Dwopala dip a finger in the lard and slip it into his mouth. A little lard and some bananas were shortly frying over our fire. When they were done we ate them. I would have to describe the taste as different. Not very good but edible. While the bananas were cooking, Dwopala's finger kept going into the lard and into his mouth. A couple of days later, I asked Dwopala if we could have some more fried bananas. His answer was, "No! lard all gone". I wondered about his liking the lard as he obviously did. What was missing from their diet that made him able to consume several pounds of lard in a few days? I also noticed that none of the natives were fat. They were all well rounded, but not even one was fat.

The BIG KIKI was a custom that, best I could learn, was a scheme to have a day for too much eating, dancing and for the men to consume to much beetle nut and kabong. Generally these BIG KIKI's were held within an island. One time, however, a really big one was held on one of the other islands and the people from all the islands were invited. Including me. I went along. I was worried that day as all the natives set out for the other island. They generally only used the larger canoes for travel between islands, but this time a lot of overloaded very small canoes were making the trip. We all went at the same time. Some of the smaller canoes became swamped, but every one including babies got out until it could be bailed out, then they got back in and continued on their way until the canoe got swamped again. I remember seeing one canoe sink at least three times.

Christmas was also a time for some celebration. Thomas apparently had a calendar and knew when Christmas arrived. The natives decorated the church with some greenery and flowers and every one wore their best cloths for services that day.

New Years passed quietly without any celebration. Also, my 21st birthday (January 18, 1943) was spent quietly. From my calendar, I knew when it arrived. I had not talked to anyone about it as I didn't think they would understand. In all the time that I spent on the island, I was brought something to eat each day. How the natives arranged for me to always have something each day I was never able to determine. My birthday was the only day that I was there, that they slipped up, and on that day I had nothing to eat. I knew that I could go to Dwopala and arrange for something, but I chose not to. I did not want to embarass any one, in the event that some one, in what ever scheme they used, had slipped up. That was to be the only day of my stay with them that this happened. I remember thinking that my Birthday was the ideal day for that to happen, as it made a memorable happening

and made me most appreciative of all the other days that I spent with these people.

I had wondered several times what I might do if the Japanese would decide to scout the islands. I considered whether or not I could stay hidden in the jungle and whether or not the natives could keep my presence quiet. I almost got my answer one day when a Japanese float type scout plane, circled low over the island and landed in the lagoon very near my little house. I was sure they would have binoculars, so I went into the house nearest to where I was standing and watched them by peeking through the wall. I called to the natives in their native tongue that they should go hide in the jungle. I was totally ignored and they all jumped into canoes and were totally excited by the appearance of the plane and started paddling out toward it, waving and shouting. The Jap taxied around out of their reach and soon took off. He was there long enough to get a good look at the island. I was sure after this that the natives would not be able to keep my being there a secret. It was obvious that they would welcome any Japs that arrived. I could only hope that they would not come.

On many occasions the boys demonstrated to me that they had a good sense of humor. They were a very happy group and laughed at everything. One day one of the boys had found several chicken eggs. The natives had some chickens and they were not penned. They of course would lay their eggs in hidden nests and hatch out chicks. The boys were trying to decide if they were still fresh and could be boiled and eaten or if they were rotten. One of the boys said that you could tell by simply grasping the egg around the long way and squeezing it. If the egg was good, it would not break. If it were bad it would break. So the boy with the eggs took one of the eggs and squeezed it hard after grasping it around the long way. I noticed most of the boys backing up just as a very rotten egg shattered and squirted rotten egg all over the boy

doing the squeezing. The laughter told me that they had set the one boy up and they were having a good belly laugh at his misfortune.

All was not total harmony among the natives. I was asked one day to go with the Chief to one of the other islands and put on paper a story of adultery that had taken place. The Chief did not apparently have any authority in the case and could only wait for the arrival of a representative of the governing body. It was obvious that they would not come for a while. The Chief wanted me to put the case on paper for him while the memories of those involved were still fresh. So I went with him and put on paper, as best I could, the happenings as reported.

Another time, a theft of some trinkets was reported. This was handled by a lot of talking about it and was solved as follows: A cross was placed in the church yard. Word of the theft was spread around the island. The next morning the missing items were found hanging on the cross. I thought, what a nice way to solve a problem.

Every one dreams and I was no exception while I was on the Island. I had two recurring type of dreams that bordered on being nightmares. One was where I would be back on the Yorktown and it would be sinking. Or I would be in a canoe and it would be sinking. In all these cases, my youngest sister (Lois age 8) would be with me and I would need to take care of her as well as myself. The other type involved a submarine or plane arriving to take me off the island. I would run down to the sub or plane and find a line of people ahead of me. You guessed it. The sub or plane was filled before my turn came.

One day shortly after school was dismissed and I had walked back to my house, several men including one that I did not recognize walked up to me and the stranger among them handed me a piece of paper. I

opened the paper and in astonishment read a note that said something like, "Please radio Guadalcanal and inform them that the entire crew of the B17, My Lovin Dove is safe and arrange for our pick up". It was signed, -- Clausen, Capt U.S. Army Air Corp.

I asked the native where the men were and he answered, "On nudder island". while pointing across the lagoon to the island I had first landed on. I was then sure that my days, of being somewhat alone, on these islands was over.

13 — ISLAND LIFE

(IN RETROSPECT)

Many of the days I spent with my native friends were very enjoyable. It was a beautiful island with a lagoon that had under-water beauty that I have yet to see matched by any films of any other area on earth. Generally speaking, film makers are able to improve on the beauty of scenery through the art of photography. They haven't come close to capturing anything like the beauty I was privileged to see.

The climate was very mild. I had only a short blanket that was loaned to me that could cover me from the waist down to my feet. This was adequate and I was able to sleep fine. Some rainy nights it became slightly uncomfortable, but that was all. The days were quite warm and always comfortable. I found it best to use the shade during the hottest part of the days.

What can I say about these beautiful people in retrospect. They took me in and cared for me and obviously enjoyed my being there. They fed me each day even though food was not plentiful.

I have thought many times about what I could do to better repay them. I have asked myself if a return visit would be to their advantage. Immediately following the war, it was out of the question financially for me to travel there.

I do consider that I was able to repay them in a way. They did enjoy my being there. I did give the men and boys an opportunity to learn and use Pidgin. This was important to them as any trip they might make to other islands, would require the ability to speak some Pidgin. I taught school for several months. I

believe that this had some positive aspects for these children later in their lives.

I have taken steps to find out how they are doing and to see if it is possible to communicate with them. Through the Catholic Church I have found three nuns that have visited the area as missionaries. These three are Sister M. Irene Alton, who was in the Buka area in the forties, Sister Therese Fortier, who was in the Buka area in the Fifties, and Sister Louise Ann Micek, who at one time was able to go to the Carteret Islands during the early Eighties. Through visits with these Sisters, I have been able, and very happy to learn that very little has changed on the islands. The people that live there today are still a happy healthy group of people that live in much the same manner as when I was there. Their houses are the same and they live almost entirely on seafood from the lagoon and food from the bush. They still wear a cloth around the waist, but the girls have added a blouse or tee shirt.

The islands are now a part of the nation of Papua New Guinea. They were granted independence after World War II and are now totally self governed. The people do have some radios and are able to hear news broadcast in Pidgin. The government has established a school on the islands and they are beginning to learn some about the rest of the world. The Catholic Church still maintains missionaries on Buka and visit the Carterets regularly.

At this writing, Sister Louise Ann is attempting to determine if any of the boys I knew are still around. I am excited about the possibility of trying to communicate with them.

Even though many of the times were enjoyable, I was never able to really enjoy my stay there. I was always homesick, and found it frustrating trying to communicate with them. There was always the

possibility that the Japanese would come to visit. Not knowing what was going on in the outside world was, for me a terrible problem. I was continually, very anxious to get back to friendly territory.

13 - ISLAND LIFE

(HISTORY Sept 8, 1942 thru Feb 25, 1943)

A lot of history took place during my stay on the island, even though not much progress was made by the Allied Forces. This time was for the most part, a time of stalemate with much fighting but not much progress on either side.

The struggle for Guadalcanal, that began on August 7, 1942 with about 2,300 Japanese (mostly construction workers) and a lesser number of marines, was to escalate to a point where more than 30,000 troops on each side slugged it out in see-saw battles for this piece of malaria infested jungle.

Many sea battles swirled around the area as each side sought to supply their own troops and cut off the supplies of the other. Each day there were air battles over and around the island as each side tried to achieve air superiority and to use it to damage the other's ground forces. To start with, the Japanese planes were required to fly more than 500 miles from Rabaul. Coast Watchers and Radar would alert the U.S. Forces and the Japanese suffered heavy losses. They later built airfields on Buka and in the Shortland Islands at the south end of Bouganville. The U.S. build up at Henderson Field was able to out match this.

On September 15, 1942, Japanese subs found the Wasp and she was hit with two or three torpedos. She was caught with her gasoline lines filled with gas and armed planes on the hangar deck. Fires destroyed her and she sank the following day.

With the Saratoga in the states, this left only the Hornet to carry on. By early October the trusty

Enterprise was repaired and returned to the area. On October 26, 1942, the Japanese again sent their re-equipped big carriers (Shokaku and Zuikaku) south to again try to dispose of the remaining U.S. Carriers and open the way to retake Henderson Field. In a battle similar to the Eastern Solomons and in the same area only farther east, the Hornet was hit by 3 bombs, 2 torpedos and 2 airplanes and was sunk. The Enterprise was again hit and damaged. The Japanese suffered the loss of planes and damage to the Shokaku and the light carrier Zuiho.

The Japanese gained in carrier strength during this engagement. With the Wasp sunk earlier and the Saratoga stateside, the loss of the Hornet left only the damaged Enterprise to carry on. This she did. She was repaired as best they could in Noumea.

By early November the Enterprise was back in action, and in conjunction with the planes from Henderson Field, were able to hold off the repeated Japanese attempts to retake Guadalcanal.

In mid November, the Japanese sent a force of eleven troop transports and escorting warships (including two light carriers) south to destroy Henderson Field and with plans to land an additional 30,000 troops and supplies. It was a massacre as Henderson Field and Enterprise pilots sank seven of the eleven transports along with several warships including the Battleship Hei. Once again the Japanese were turned back.

While I was spending a quiet New Years Eve, about 50 miles away, the Submarine U. S. S. Nautilus was rescuing a group of 29 Allied civilians including 14 Nuns from Bouganville. Among the Nuns was Sister Irene Alton. Sister Irene would return to Bouganville and Buka after the war and would spend 23 years of her life as a missionary in this area. It has been one of the pleasures of gathering information for this book, that I have been able to meet and visit with her.

The Japanese continued to slip troops and supplies in during the nights and the fighting on Guadalcanal continued. Slowly the U.S. Forces gained the upper hand and finally on February 1, 1943, all the remaining Japanese troops on Guadalcanal were withdrawn. The Japanese expansion in the Pacific had been stopped and they were finally being driven back.

In Europe during this period, the fighting was centered in North Africa. The British were still being driven back during August 1942. With American help, the tide there was also turned and by early February, the Germans were driven from North Africa. 250,000 of their troops were trapped and captured near the end.

Most important of all was the fact that during this time, our soldiers and sailors were becoming veteran fighters. They now knew they could meet the enemy and best him. Nothing trains a man for the job of fighting better than being in a fight.

14 — THE B17 BOYS ARRIVE

(AS I REMEMBER)

When I found out that the B17 crew had drifted into the same island that I had first landed on, I asked that I be taken to them. I got in the canoe and we paddled about two hours across the Lagoon. As we approached the island I could make out several very thin kakai clad barefoot white men on the beach. We landed and they all came down to greet me. I shook hands with each one and introduced myself. When I told them who I was, how long I had been there and that I did not have a radio, their faces dropped and some of them walked up the beach and dejectedly sat down. I stayed that night with them and visited about how the war was going etc.

There were nine men. They were:

Pilot -- Captain T.J. Clausen
Co-Pilot -- Lt. E.C. Ruiz
Navigator -- Lt. R.J. Dorwart
Bombardier -- Lt. B.C. Gibson
Engineer -- T.Sgt. D.O. Martin
Turret Gun -- Corp. W.H. Nichols
Radioman -- Sgt. J. Hunt
Waist Gun -- Corp. T.H. Edwards
Tail Gun -- Corp. R.J. Turnbull

They had been flying out of Guadalcanal and had taken off on a scouting mission on February 9, 1943. They were shot down after a running battle with eight Zeros and had drifted for 15 days. Each one of the men had received some minor wounds. The most serious was Nichols, who had a bullet or piece of shrapnel in his heel. He was able to walk but with some pain. It was also infected.

I quizzed them on how the war was going and found out that not much progress had been made since I was shot down five months prior. Our forces had finally been able to evict the Japanese from Guadalcanal but that was about it.

I was able to tell them that we were about 40 miles East of Buka and the North end of Bouganville.

The next day we loaded into several canoes and made the trip to Dwopala's island and started considering what our next move would be.

After talking with Dwopala about whether this many could be fed on this one island and determining that it would be a great imposition on the people, it was decided that we would have to break up the group and put a few on each island. This would make communication difficult but would have to be done.

We also talked about what we could do to be able to get back to friendly forces. The closest at that time was Guadalcanal. These men had been flying over the Solomon Islands for several weeks so had a good grasp of the lay of the islands and when I was able to tell them where we were in connection with Buka and Bouganville, they could see that it might be possible to sail a canoe to Guadalcanal. They knew that there was a Coastwatcher on Choiseul and that we might be able to reach him. So we set our plans to explore these possibilities. With this in mind, it was decided that Capt. Clausen, Lt. Dorwart (navigator) and I would stay on Dwopala's island to finalize these plans, and the others would be sent to other islands. With Dwopala's help we arranged for two each of the men to go to three of the other islands and for Lt. Gibson to go to the closest and smallest of the inhabited islands (the next island east).

I talked with Dwopala about the possibility of obtaining one of the larger canoes. He told us that the largest one was on one of the other islands, so we went over to see it. It was the largest I had seen and was not in use as it was just to big to handle for such chores as fishing. It was not usable as it had been sitting for sometime. One of the men had some American Greenbacks so we arranged to buy it and tow it back to our island. Only the main part was usable and it had a lot of cracks. I talked with Dwopala about what would be needed to repair it and to build a sail for it. He told us that the best man for the job was Goni who lived on the smallest island (The one Gibson was on). So we went over and talked him into coming over and helping us overhaul the canoe. Goni took on the job and the only part we did was to watch.

The making of the sail was interesting to watch. First there was only one man in the islands that supposedly knew how to measure a canoe for a sail. He was summoned from another island. He approached the canoe and using a pocket knife, made a show of using the knife blade to measure something on the canoe. He actually walked up to the end and using the knife blade and his thumb, measured from the end of the canoe to nowhere in particular. He then walked over to a clear area in the church yard and stuck three sticks in the ground to form a triangle. The sail was to be this size.

Several women went to work gathering the leaves needed for the sail and in making the string that would be required. Some of the men went into the bush and cut the bamboo poles that would be used. Work then started on the sail and a couple of days later we had a sail that was tailor made for our canoe.

The sail was made in the shape of a triangle with bamboo poles on two sides. Where the two poles met was to be placed in the bow of the canoe. One of the poles would then be hoisted to the top of the mast

that was tied vertically in the canoe. The second bamboo pole then formed the boom. A rope was tied to the end of the boom and was held by one of the crew members to control how far out it would be allowed to go. The rope holding member generally sat out on the outrigger platform to add weight while the canoe was under sail. In a good breeze several of us had to sit on the outrigger platform. (similar to a catamaran). The steering was performed with an oar placed in the water near the stern. Primitive but effective when sailing about 90 degrees to a good breeze.

In our visits with Goni and Dwopala we felt it best to wait for the right wind before starting out. It was decided that Capt. Clausen would of course go. Also the navigator Dorwart should go. I should go because I would be able to talk to any natives we might encounter. We thought a fourth crewman should go and Lt. Gibson (bombardier) was chosen by Clausen to go. In preparation for the trip, we got all the available canteens and filled them with water. One rubber boat was deflated and packed. A bunch of green coconuts were arranged for and the natives made us some of the baked taro to take with us.

As we waited for the wind to be right and it didn't seem to be, Capt Clausen remarked that we might just as well leave anytime, as the right wind when we left, could change an hour after we left. So we picked a day to start our voyage.

The plan was to leave in about mid-day and to sail southeast and get clear of Bouganville during the night. All the time Goni was working on the canoe, he kept asking that we take him along. We couldn't see asking him to take the risks we were willing to take. He kept saying that if he stayed there he would shortly be out of cloths to wear and out of fish hooks. The plan also called for the boys that remained behind to wait seven days and then gather on the main island and if we made it we would arrange for

them to be picked up. If after another three days no one came, they should consider that we did not make it and they were on their own to decide what to do.

Our leaving date was all set and as planned, we said our farewells to our native friends. I gave Thomas my trusty pencil. I had nothing to give the Doctor except my thanks. I had nothing more I could give to Dwopala. He had earlier got my shorts and after a lot of asking I had given him my rusty unusable 45 calibre pistol (the firing pin was totally rusted away). We paddled and sailed down to near my island and slipped through the reef there. We then hoisted the sail and were just getting the feel of sailing when the wind shifted 180 degrees and upset the canoe. The sail was rigged in a way that it hung on one side of the main (only) mast. A 180 degree shift of wind would blow the sail hard against the mast and upset the canoe. We righted the canoe and managed to salvage everything except my small collection of sea shells and paddled back to the island.

We were bitterly disappointed but were determined to try again. Next time we would invite Goni to go along if he still wanted to. Perhaps he would be more help than we thought.

That night we left the canoe in the water. This was the first time we had done this. The next morning we noticed that it was sitting at an angle. We went down to check and found that the wood that was chosen for the outrigger had become water logged and would not float. As I looked at it and talked with Goni about replacing it, I thought about our upsetting being one more of those little miracles of my experience. Had we kept going we would have been trying to sail a canoe at night with an outrigger that did not float.

With the outrigger replaced and this time with Goni going along, we notified the other guys of our new leaving date.

14 — THE B17 BOYS ARRIVE

(IN RETROSPECT)

These men had taken off from Guadalcanal on February 9, 1943. This was barely one week after the final Japanese withdrawal from there. They had been stationed at Henderson Field for several weeks prior to this mission. They were found by (they believe) eight zeros and engaged them in a running battle of close to 30 minutes. They believed they shot down two or more of the zeros. They all received minor shrapnel wounds, but none of them were hurt seriously. They drifted ashore late at night on February 24, 1943 after 15 days and a few hours. They had three boats which they kept tied together with three men in each boat. They had one canteen of water for each man and in their case, did have some emergency rations. I met them the day of February 25, 1943. They too were a lucky bunch of boys.

I was very happy to see them. Some one to visit with in English was a real boost for me.

Had they not arrived at these islands, I would probably have remained there by myself for at least six more months.

They too were very anxious to be able to return to friendly territory and we began our planning within the first few days. We all recognized that we were probably safe there and could await rescue, but that possibility was never seriously considered.

I was to spend about one month with Capt. Clausen and Lt. Dorwart, arranging for the canoe, etc. We left the island about April 1, 1943.

14 — THE B17 BOYS ARRIVE

(HISTORY Feb 25 thru April 1, 1943)

These weeks were used by the U.S. Forces to consolidate their gains and to complete plans for their next move, which was to be to New Georgia. The United States had only the damaged Enterprise and the Saratoga to oppose the remaining Japanese fleet which contained two fleet carriers and three light carriers. New carriers were being built in the States, but it would be months before the first one would be available. It seemed prudent at this time to be cautious with Enterprise and Saratoga. They were very careful to not let them stray out far enough to be within range of the torpedo planes from Rabaul. The Japanese expansion had been halted. It was time to be cautious and wait for the new carriers to arrive.

It is interesting to note here, that from 1936 until Pearl Harbor, the Navy had given construction of battleships a higher priority than carriers. As a result, new battleships were joining the Pacific Fleet, but the next carrier (Essex) would not be available and battle ready until August of 1943.

In Europe, it was also a time to consolidate gains and make plans for the next moves. The German expansion was finally stopped in both Africa and in Russia.

15 — THE VOYAGE TO GUADALCANAL

(AS I REMEMBER)

We said our goodbyes again and about noon, climbed in the canoe. As we tried to start out, Goni's wife came running down and climbed in. It was with difficulty that Goni and some of the other men were able to physically take her back to the beach. This was one of the few times I had seen any of the natives show any emotion. We then sailed out past the nearest island down to near Wiley's Island. We took down the sail and paddled through the reef to the open ocean. We raised the sail again and with Goni steering set a course southeast. I watched with some fear, as the safety of our islands disappeared below the horizon. I also felt a sadness that I had to leave Dwopala, my boys and my friends. I shortly became aware that Goni had steered us in a circle and we were headed back Northwest. The wind had changed directions again, and he had gone with the wind so as to not get upset. We took the sail down and raised it again in the proper manner for an off shore wind and were soon making good progress toward the southeast. The sail was rigged such that to change directions 180 degrees, required that the canoe be turned around and the sail set up at the opposite end. What was the bow of the canoe became the stern and vice versa.

The rest of the afternoon was uneventful. The wind changed on us a couple more times, but Goni handled the steering very well. As evening fell, we felt that our plans were working fine and we seemed to be making good progress. After dark, we watched for the Southern Cross to rise in the southeast and steered toward it. The Cross rises in the southeast and swings an arc across the sky, with the up and down stars pointing south. It was a clear night and we

used the Southern Cross as our guiding light. Toward morning it clouded up so we could only steer by guess.

It was a long night. When you stay awake all night it seems very long indeed. At first light we could see that we were very close to land. If we had made the distance we had planned in the direction we had planned, this would be the east coast of Choiseul. As it grew lighter and Clausen and Dorwart studied the land and another island appeared at some distance straight ahead, it was apparent that this was part of Japanese held Bouganville. Then the wind came up very strong so we took the sail down. We tried to turn the canoe to paddle away from land but the wind and waves held us broadside and pushed us toward Bouganville. Try as we might, we were caught broadside and couldn't turn the canoe. Soon we heard Goni say "up um sail". It didn't seem the thing to do in a very strong wind, but after he said it several times, we set about to raise the sail. With the sail up, with Goni steering and three of us sitting out near the outrigger, we were soon cutting through the waves at a very fast clip. I remembered again that I was thankful that we had upset on the first attempt. As we steered away from Bouganville and toward Choiseul the wind calmed down but remained brisk and we moved along fine. We decided at this point to make for the closest part of Chouisel. This would take us to the West Coast, in the slot between the Solomon Island chain.

The sky was cloudy that windy morning, but showed signs of clearing. We were aware that we were crossing a stretch of water between a large Japanese Base and Choiseul. We saw many planes taking off from the Shortland Island area just south of Bouganville. Soon one seemed to see us and flew over to give us a fly by. Made us very nervous. Several more planes appeared to take a look at us. Two in particular, came down to below 1000 feet and flew a complete circle around. We did not look up or wave. We just sat there as if nothing was wrong. I remember

thinking to myself, if they make a strafing run should I jump in the water or what. Fortunately, they flew their complete circle and went on their way. I remember counting 17 aircraft that were close enough to see us. We saw many more but only the two came near enough to cause us any real concern.

Finally the sun broke through the clouds and at a time when I was sure that it must be late afternoon, the sun told us that it was still morning. We continued sailing and just before dark were able to land on a nice beach on Choiseul.

We pulled the canoe as far up on the beach as we could and lay down for a nights sleep. The next day we poled and paddled the canoe southeast along the island. At nightfall we again beached the canoe and prepared to spend the night. Sometime in the night, Goni woke me. He was with another native. I was asked "You Merican". I answered, "Yes, me Merican". We then woke the others and the newcomer explained that he was with the Coast Watchers and that he was sent to take us to them. He then shouted something and about six more natives joined us.

The next day, with our new friends, we again poled and paddled southeast along the island. About mid-afternoon we were told to make for shore. We did this and this time with the natives help, we pulled our trusty canoe clear up into the jungle and hid it. We were then told that the Coast Watchers were up in the mountains about a three hour hike uphill. We could start then or wait for morning. We were anxious to start even though we knew we might get caught by darkness on a mountain in the jungle.

We went for it and just before dark we reached a building perched on a hillside in a very dense jungle. We were greeted by two white men. They were Nick Waddell and Carden Seton. They had spotted us the day before and had followed our progress down the island.

There were Japanese on Choiseul, but only at patrol strength. Waddell took the information on who we were etc. The next day he disappeared for several hours to go to their Transmitter and send a message to Guadalcanal on our arrival. When he returned, he told us that we would have to travel down the Island to a meeting place where a PBY could pick us up. It would take two nights to get there. A date was set for us to be picked up.

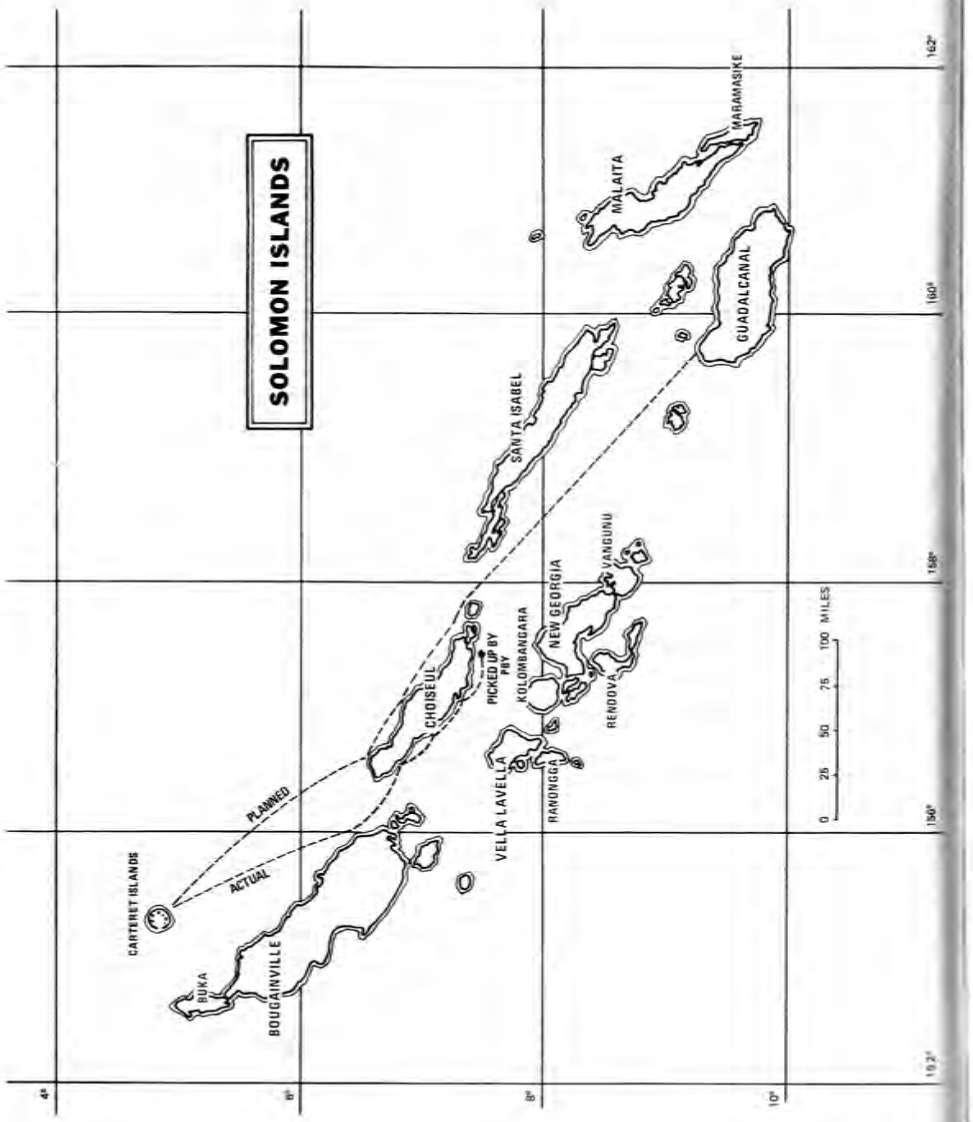
During our short stay with Waddell and Seton, we learned that Waddell had been the assigned governor of Choiseul. He was from Scotland. Before the war, Choiseul was part of the British Mandated portion of the Solomon Islands. Seton was Australian and had been a Plantation Manager on Choiseul. They had been brought in by submarine and set ashore by rubber boats to set up an observation post to try to gather information on Japanese movements in the Shortland Harbor area. They had set up a place of business that allowed them to observe the Shortland Island area. They had selected about two dozen or more natives that they had known and formed a small army to help keep watch. They had armed some with 30-06 Springfield rifles and had trained them in their use.

Also while we were there we were able to take the first fresh water bath we had had in months. A native took us about a half mile to a waterfall and pool of water. We grabbed the soap and jumped in. I remember that the first time I tried to lather up, all I got was an oily mess. Persistence paid off and we were finally squeaky clean for the first time in a long time. It felt so good. Course we had to put our only clothes back on.

About three days later we hiked down the mountain and as soon as it was dark, got into a canoe. This canoe was not an outrigger type. It was a tremendous canoe about six feet wide and at least twenty feet long. Compared to our outrigger, it was a work of art. It

appeared to be carved out of a huge log. It was a balanced canoe and as the natives scrambled in to take their places, they put the same number on each side. We got in and our crew of about twelve set off paddling and paddled all night. The next day we slept hidden in the jungle and the next night, traveled again. The next morning we landed at a deserted village. We hid the canoe and went inside some buildings and stayed out of sight. About mid-afternoon we heard some excitement and learned that the natives had captured a Japanese pilot. He was armed, but they had tricked him into firing at a tree until the gun was empty and then jumped him. As they got him to the village and he saw a native armed with a rifle, he bolted and ran to the beach and got in a small canoe to try to escape. We watched out the window of the house we were in as the armed natives ran him down and shot him. We reasoned that we were lucky in a way that he had tried to escape, as it would be very difficult and dangerous to keep a prisoner where we were. I remember Wadell commenting that his score was now even. Seven fliers picked up and Seven Japanese killed.

The next day was the day we were supposed to get picked up. We stayed inside listening for the sounds of the PBY but it did not come. We wondered of course what was wrong. We remained hopeful and patient and late afternoon of the following day we finally heard the sound of approaching planes. A big and beautiful PBY landed just off shore. There were about six Corsair fighters overhead. We quickly jumped in a canoe and with a quick handshake to Wadell, we were paddled out to the plane and hurried aboard. A canoe full of supplies for Waddell and his crew were quickly unloaded. The engines revved up and we were soon airborne and headed southeast with six beautiful Corsair fighters, and their big white stars weaving back and forth above us. It was near dark as we landed at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. WE HAD MADE IT.



15 — THE VOYAGE TO GUADALCANAL

(IN RETROSPECT)

Our trip to Guadalcanal, in many respects was risky and really fool-hardy. We would probably have been perfectly safe, staying on the islands and eventually we would have been able to attract the attention of a friendly airplane. There was really nothing to gain by risking our lives, other than getting home at an earlier time. These thoughts crossed my mind as we planned our trip, but were never seriously considered. Clausen, Dorwart, Gibson and I were quite ready to put it all on the line with very little thinking about it. My going along, because I would be able to talk to Goni and to any other natives we might encounter, was in my mind, most important. The driving force was homesickness. It is a most powerful force.

We were successful in this trip through blind luck more than careful planning. Think about it. We traveled to an island that was known to have Japanese patrols on it and exposed ourselves during the day by paddling south along the island. Fortunately we were seen by the Coast Watchers before the Japanese. There were two Coast Watchers, and we don't know how many Japanese. We were very lucky.

Now that it is all over, I am glad that I was able to be a part of this trip. There is a sense of accomplishment in our getting ourselves (including the six guys left behind) back to friendly forces. It also allowed me to meet and spend a few days with Waddell and Seton. They were a remarkable pair doing a very dangerous, important job.

The job done by the Coast Watchers of the Solomons is truly unique in the annals of war. Nowhere else was

this exact type of activity employed. The terrain and the people involved made it possible here. They were a tremendous asset in terms of enemy activity reported, Allied personnel rescued (including a future President of the U.S.) and in enemy forces destroyed. Their story is best told in Walter Lord's book titled "Lonely Vigil". Read it.

Had our good luck continued, I am sure we could have made it the rest of the way to Guadalcanal in our canoe. We had covered about one third of the distance on our own. Had we been required to do it on our own, we would have been in safer territory going down the east coast of Choiseul as originally planned, instead of down the slot between the Solomon Island chain. Waddell and Seton made it much easier and much safer.

15 — THE VOYAGE TO GUADALCANAL

(HISTORY April 1 thru April 11, 1943)

Not much happened historically while we were traveling south, except that the Japanese had gathered all their air strength at Rabaul and the other airfields in the Solomons and on April 7, 1943, made one big raid on Guadalcanal. This concentration of airplanes included the aircraft from their four operational carriers.

They succeeded in destroying 25 planes and in sinking a destroyer, a tanker, a corvette and two cargo ships. The Japanese losses were 39 planes.

We were with Seton and Waddell on this day but were not aware of these happenings.

History was made a few weeks later, after we were on our way home. Admiral Yamamoto had planned on visiting the air base at the south end of Bouganville. This is the one we had passed close by. On April 18, 1943, he was killed when his plane was ambushed and shot down over Bouganville.

16 — THE TRIP HOME

(AS I REMEMBER)

We arrived at Guadalcanal in the evening of April 11, 1943. We were taken to a mess hall by jeep and had an evening meal and then to a tent and turned in for the night. The next morning, a jeep driver again picked us up and we were taken to a mess hall and stood in line with a group of marines and had breakfast. We must have been a strange looking lot, we were all still barefoot, with me in my worn out dungarees, and with Clausen, Dorwart and Gibson still shirtless and in their faded pants. Goni was also still with us in his cloth. We just went through the line and got some breakfast and sat down together and enjoyed the meal. No one in the mess hall seemed to give us more than a glance. Guess it was not unusual for strange looking people to be there.

After the meal we were again loaded in a jeep and taken down a very muddy road to a quonset hut where a small man with stars on his collar came outside and we were introduced to Admiral Marc Mitscher. We shook hands and had some pictures taken. Capt. Clausen then told the Admiral that we had left six men on the islands and that we had promised Goni that he would be returned home. The Admiral said that he was sorry but he felt he could not even ask for volunteers to go that far north for a pick up. It would have to wait. He turned to me and said that I would be sent directly to the States for some leave.

At this time I was taken in tow by an aide and without realizing it, and without so much as a handshake, was separated from my Air Corps friends and Goni. I guess we felt we would again be together. We would not. I was taken to a medical tent for a physical and dental examination. The Doctors told me that some work would

Four Barefoot, Happy and very Lucky guys meet an Admiral on Guadalcanal.

Left to right: Lt. Dorwart; Lt. Gibson; Capt. Classen; Radioman Wiley and Admiral Marc Mitcher.

probably be required on my leg, but as long as I was getting around as well as I seemed to be, it could wait. The dentist could find nothing wrong with my teeth except they hadn't been brushed for a while. He said, "Go back to brushing and have them checked again in a few months." I was interviewed by several correspondents, and finally was given some new dungarees, shirt and shoes. I removed my old dungarees and deposited them in the trash. The new clothes felt good, but the shoes and socks felt strange.

I got a pen and some paper and took time to write a letter to the folks at home. I knew they would be notified by the Navy that I was safe, but felt a letter explaining what had happened was certainly in order.

The next day I was placed aboard a DC-3 and was flown to Noumea New Caledonia. One night there and again I was on a plane to the Fiji Islands. While there I stayed in a tent with some Navy guys. They suggested that I should send my folks a cable to tell them that I was alright. I had no money yet so they volunteered to pay the fee. With their help I composed a Cable-Gram. Cables were sent using codes representing phrases. This way a single letter sent by cable could represent a phrase. Using the phrases available we put together the following: GREETINGS ALL WELL AND SAFE LETTERS SENT= DELMAR.

I spent a couple of nights on Fiji and was then able to get on board a flying boat for the trip to Pearl Harbor. The flying boat was one of the Pan Am Clipper Ships that prior to the war flew passengers across the Pacific. The crew was Pan Am but the only passengers now were Service Personnel. From the Fiji's we flew all day and landed in the lagoon of Canton Island. There we spent the night and the following morning prepared to take-off for Pearl. As I went aboard, the Steward came to me and said I would need to ride in

the galley. In the galley was a small dinette sort of place with room to seat three or four people. He explained that a merchant ship had been sunk near there and that the Captain had priority for the seat I was in. He also said that if I was left in Canton waiting for an empty seat to come by, I might be there a long time. So I rode in the Galley as a sort of official stow-away from Canton to Pearl Harbor.

At Pearl, I was again checked by doctors and given some additional clothes. I was there a couple of nights and then got on board a large Navy transport plane and flew to San Francisco. This time we flew at night. It was an all night 16 hour flight on a PB4Y four engined flying boat. We landed at the Alameda Air Station. In Alameda, I was taken in tow by (I believe a Chief Petty Officer). He took good care of me. He followed up on my pay records and saw to it that I finally got some pay. I still only had dungarees to wear, so at his suggestion, we went to a tailor in town and had some dress blues made. (A common practice with sailors as tailor mades were superior to GI issue and were acceptable to the Navy). He next helped me to arrange for train tickets home and filed the papers for a 30-day leave. We also took the time to file a report on Corl and Townsend to assure that their status was changed from missing to killed in action. Through the Red Cross I requested the home addresses so that I might write to their next of kin. I was also invited to the Chief's home. From his home, at his urging I placed a phone call home. We did not have a phone in our Glenwood home, so this call required some one at the phone office to arrange to get a message to Mother to go to a phone and to call a San Francisco operator who would complete the call. It worked and late that night I was able to talk to Mother for several minutes. I was able to tell her that I was fine and that I would be home and gave her the arrival time of the train I would be on.

THE TRIP HOME (AS I REMEMBER)

It was a long train ride home. I had arranged for a Pullman so that I could sleep on the trip. Two middle-aged women had seats near mine. I had a lower bunk and one of them had an upper. She was worried about getting into the upper, so I traded with her. In our conversations, they soon learned of my experience and they took good care of me. I spent most of the trip home with these two ladies including trips to the dining car for our meals. It helped to make the ride a little shorter.

At long last we arrived in Omaha about three hours late and at about 11:00 at night. I was sure that no one would be able to meet me, but my two ladies were sure some one would. Turned out I was right, there was no one there. I walked over to the Bus depot and got on the first bus for Glenwood. Another long ride and the bus arrived in Glenwood about 2:00 A.M. As it pulled up to stop, I spotted my Dad and brothers Gib and Austin. I hurried off, shook hands with Gib and Austin, and gave my Dad a big hug. They had a car, so we piled in for the short trip over the hill to home. Mom heard us coming so she Jim and Lois were up and with two more hugs. I was at last HOME.

16 — THE TRIP HOME

(IN RETROSPECT)

It is just not possible to describe the feeling of being home. How many times had I felt that I might never be able to again walk in our back door and into that very familiar kitchen. The two and a half years of home sickness was gone, at least for the present. Only those that have experienced it, can even begin to understand.

Home had changed very little, and yet it had changed a lot. Mother and Dad and my older brothers were the same, but Lois who was seven and Jim who was thirteen when I left, had changed. They were now nine and fifteen. The town had changed in that all of my friends were off to the war. At the time of my arrival, word was just beginning to trickle in concerning the fate of the men of "Company I" (the National Guard Company from Glenwood). They were captured during the Battle of Kasserine Pass in North Africa and word of them was slow in coming through from Germany. I suppose my arriving home safely after being listed as "Missing in Action", was a morale booster for the friends and relatives of those boys. At least I hope it was.

My "Company I" friends were to spend the rest of WWII (over two years) as POW's in Germany and were then able to come home in the fall of 1945. Had I not joined the Navy, this book might have been written about being a POW in Germany.

My folks had tried to meet the train. It was a long train and people were getting off cars over a length of several blocks. They assumed they had missed me. Trains during the war were over crowded and sometimes it was necessary to actually run two trains to handle

all the passengers. I was on the second section of a two train system traveling under a single train number.

Admiral Mitscher must have put some real muscle behind the orders to get me home. I was home in Glenwood within two weeks of leaving Guadalcanal. A remarkable feat for those days.

During my very short 30-day leave, I was able to provide interviews to a number of newspapers and radio stations, visit with a lot of people, go on a War Bond Drive to Des Moines, Ottumuwa, and other Iowa Towns, and meet and court a new girl in town. On May 22, 1943, Glenwood held a WILEY DAY Parade to honor my return. It was a nice thing to do. I enjoyed the attention, even though I was quite sick that day with malaria. I was scheduled to return to the Air Station at Alameda, Calif., but being ill I reported into the nearest station, which was the Naval Hospital at Great Lakes Ill.

Another interesting thing happened while I was home. The Jewelry Store that I bought my Rose Gold Gruen Watch from, had sent my parents a bill for the watch that I had finished paying for in January of 1941. It is strange they would wait almost two years to send out a bill. I should have heard from them much sooner, or is it that they picked up on my missing in action report. I wrote them a letter. Probably should have notified authorities but did not.

The war was to continue for another two and one half years. After a stay in the hospital at Great Lakes where my malaria was somewhat controlled and a piece of brass was removed from my right ankle, I was assigned duty at the Primary Flight Training Station in Ottumwa, Iowa. I spent the rest of the war there in a category of Limited Duty due to malaria and the weakness in my right leg.

Even though they were married and had children at the time, my brothers, Gib and Aus were both caught up in the draft and served in the Navy in the Pacific. Ironic that the Navy would not accept Austin when he first tried to enlist as an 18 year old out of High School, but later his feet were no problem. Like many things in this world, what happens depends on need.

I married that new girl in town and started a family life in the freedom we had fought to preserve. I have wondered so many times as to why I would be permitted to survive and to have the opportunity for a life, when so many others were not. I think of the many men I knew who would not make it home, but in particular I seem to think of Harry Corl, Bob Townsend and the young Japanese Pilot that I watched die on Choiseul.

My right leg has remained weak. At first I was unable to walk upstairs except left leg up only. With time and exercise it has strengthened to overcome that. It remains weaker than the left leg and because the scar tissue is attached to the muscle, I am not able to double it up as you would to squat down. Malaria remained with me for about three years and slowly was worn down to nothing.

I did write to Corl and Townsend's next-of-kin. Corl had only a sister and she answered only my first letter. Townsend's parents lived in Delhi, New York and we corresponded for several years. They too just quit answering. I am sure something happened to them.

Several months after getting home, I recieved a letter from one of the guys that had been left on the islands. Admiral Mitscher had apparently had a change of heart and had allowed a rescue mission to be flown for picking up the remaining six men. He reported that a flying boat had arrived and Goni got off wearing a big grin and navy dungarees. (Goni is the native that went with us in the canoe) He also had other provisions with him. We corresponded a few

times and like many others lost touch. I was pleased to know that Goni got home safely. Later I was to read the story of "My Lovin Dove" in the Liberty Magazine.

The experience I had, has without question affected my later life.

I believe I have been better able to enjoy my life because I recognize I came so very close to missing it. I can truly enjoy a drink of water. Even today, as each August 24th rolls around on the calendar, I remember it quietly with a long slow drink of cool water.

The experience has proven to be a burden from the standpoint that as people learn of it they want to ask questions. In my working experience, I found that it was best to avoid bringing it up, as it could be very time consuming to talk about and to answer these questions. On the other hand, I do enjoy talking with friends about it.

FLASH BACKS -- I have had flash backs that have caused me some minor problems. A couple examples come to mind. In 1958 after living in the mid-west for ten plus years, we made a family trip to the west coast. We first reached the coast in Oregon after dark and my first view of the ocean was from a viewpoint some 50 feet above the water. About the same height as the flight deck. This first sudden view of the blackness of the ocean at night shook me for several minutes. Another time was during our 25th anniversary trip to Hawaii. We had first visited the Islands of Hawaii, Maui and Kauai and then flew into Ohau. The familiar view of Ohau and Pearl Harbor as we landed set me up and then as we taxied toward the unloading area, I suddenly saw a Japan Air Line plane with a large Red Meatball painted on the tail. The sudden appearence of that meatball caused me to jump and I felt weak for a few minutes.

Writing this book has turned into a mini-ordeal for me and has caused me several sleepless nights as I force myself to re-live some scary times. Visiting with friends about these times never caused me much trouble, as we generally talked about the pleasant experiences on the island. Writing this book has required that I think back through the gut wrenching details, that visiting generally skipped over. A number of evenings after working on it, my wife Doris has asked me, "Are you feeling alright?" My answer has been, "Yes just writing the book." Some evenings required the use of some medicinal bourbon. I am glad it is finished. I have had dreams associated with these times, but I have not had what I would term nightmares.

So far this book has tracked me and what was happening to me. While all this was going on and I knew I was at least alive, my folks and friends were left very much in the dark. These happenings were certainly rough on them. So that you might also realize what they went through, I would like to include here the information that My Family received and in the order they received it. I will repeat them as closely as possible, <u>including the typo errors</u>.

The last letter the folks received from me would have been written in July and would not have included any details about the Battle of Midway, as we were not allowed to write home about such things. Then during this time, the Navy released the information that the Yorktown was sunk in early June. They had heard from me in July so knew that I was O.K. after the sinking. Then they heard nothing from me between July and the following Telegram dated Sept 16, 1942.

WESTERN
UNION

wm cs 74 Govt
Washington DC 221 AM Sept 16
Guy Alvi Wiley
Four Park Ave
Glenwood, Iowa.

The Navy department deeply regrets to inform you that your Son Delmer Dean Wiley Radioman third Class US Navy is Missing following Action in the Perfermance of his duty and in the Serverce of his Country. The Department appreciates your great anxietity but details not now available and delay in reciept thereof must necessarily be expected. To prevent possiable aid to our enemies Please do not diviluge the Name of his ship or station

Rear Admiral Randall, Jacobs Chief of
Navil pernsonll.....810 AM

This type of telegram was the standard procedure that the Government used to notify next of kin of boys that were missing or killed in action. My Sister Lois has related to me in recent years details about the day they received it. Our family had been spared from any deaths or serious injuries or illnesses (except for Owen) and as an eight year old girl, she did not really know how to react or what feelings to expect. She went home from school for lunch that day and found Mom sitting quietly at the kitchen table. Mom handed her the telegram to read, which she did. It had been several months since they had heard from me. She was shocked and thought that she should cry or something. She normally used part of the lunch time to practice on her Trumpet. So she asked Mom if she should practice, and Mom told her it would be alright, so she did. I had never talked to Mom or Dad about that day, so have no first hand idea of their reactions.

Then in November the following letter.

Torpedo Squadron THREE
c/o Postmaster,
San Francisco, California.
November 23, 1942

Mr. Guy A. Wiley
4 Park Ave.,
Glenwood, Iowa.

Dear Mr. Wiley:

By this time you have undoubtedly received word from the Navy Department that your son was reported "missing in action" when he failed to return from an attack mission on the afternoon of August 24, 1942.

As commanding officer of the squadron of which he was a member may I extend to you heartfelt sympathy in the name of the entire squadron. I know you will want such further details in regard to him as I possess and am free to give.

Delmar was one of two rear-seat men flying with pilot Machinist Corl, U.S. Navy, on the afternoon of August 24th while on a search flight for a Japanese task force. Machinist Corl, together with pilot of another plane of the squadron sighted the force and proceeded to attack it with bombs. While making his bombing run he was attacked by two Jap fighters. At that time he broke away from his formation and his plane was not seen again. There is no visual evidence of his plane having been shot down but since it failed to return to the ship it is considered that your son is missing in action along with the other members of the planes crew. We can only hope that in time we may hear good news of them - but the chance of this seems more and more remote with each passing day.

I knew Delmar well and I with all his shipmates feel his loss keenly. Yours is the greater anxiety and grief but if he does not return I trust that in time the thought that he gave his life fearlessly to serve and protect his country will be of some small solace to you.

Again let me express, on behalf of the officers and men our deepest sympathy. Please feel free to call on me if I can be of any further assistance to you.

Sincerely yours

(signed)

C. M. Jett,
Lieutenant Commander
U. S. Navy

Commanding Officer,
Torpedo Squadron THREE

This is a nicely written letter. Commander Jett did "fib a bit" about knowing me very well, as we had only been together a few weeks and there were over one hundred men in his squadron. It was, however the thing to say. I do not have any comments from Lois about it's arrival. She does tell me of the times between getting these messages and the time I finally came home, of the several memorial services held in Glenwood and of the many prayers said for me and all the others that were away.

Then after several more months, the following Cable was received. This is the one I sent from the Fiji Islands made up of phrases.

POSTAL
TELEGRAPH

HA74 HA,CB80 C,NB176 1943 APR 22 AM
9 57
BN22N (ELEVEN) EFM IMP PUSNC=
MRS GUY WILEY=
(GLENWOOD IOWA)=

GREETINGS ALL WELL AND SAFE LETTERS SENT=

DALMER WILEY.

When this was received, the family did not know what to make of it. The name was mis-spelled and being made up of phrases, it did not convey the message that I was alright.

The very next day, Lois tells of being at home when the mail came. Our mail box was in a building out near the alley in back of the house. It was a slot in the side of the shed with a box for the mail to drop into. She was in the shed at the time and was quiet as the mail man dropped a letter through the slot. She picked it up and seeing it was from me and recognizing my handwriting, wondered if she should open it or not. She was afraid to take it to Mother for fear it was an old letter that just came or had additional bad news. After some delay, she took it to Mom who opened it and read it all the way through and cried. Lois just stood there and wondered what was happening. Finally Mother was able to tell her that I was alright and then let her read the letter for herself.

The letter was hand written and is reproduced here in type but has all the exact same words that was in it. As I read it now, it is a pretty good letter all things considered and really tells the whole story. The first sentence is particularly interesting.

Delmer D Wiley ARM3/c
Staff Comander Air
Solomon Isles, Guadalcanal
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.

April 12, 1943

Dear Folks,

I suppose you've been wondering where I've been hiding for the past 7 1/2 months. It's to long a story to tell right now, so I'll just let you in on the high spots. I met up with two zero's on August 24, 1942. My pilot and bombardier were killed. My right leg was shot up a bit. I got a piece of shrapnel from a 20mm in my right ankle, and another one clipped me in the thigh. They are all healed up by now. Back to the story. After we crashed, by some miracle, I got the rubber boat, and got in. I spent 15 days, almost to the hour, in the rubber boat before I finally landed on a small island. I can't tell you the name of this island for fear the Japs might up and bomb it just because they helped an American. The natives took me in, fed me and dressed my wounds as best they could. The only way out was by canoe, and not being familar with the lay of the islands up there, I couldn't very well set out alone. The only planes that flew over were Jap, so I couldn't very well signal one. After 6 months, a Flying Fortress Crew drifted in to the same island. The pilot and navigator were naturally familiar with the islands around there. So, with one native, the pilot of the B-17, the navigator, and I set out in an outrigger canoe, with no chart, and only a small pocket compass,

sailed and paddled that canoe out to safety.

Altogether I had enough experiences to write a book. I'm kinda rushed now, but as soon as I can get around to it, I'll write the whole story. It's stranger than fiction, believe me.

Unless I get torpedoed or something, I'll soon be in the States. I hope I can get a little leave.

I'll only be here a short time so please don't write to the address I have on the letter. Censorship regulations require it. I mean the address on the letter. I'll write and let you know as soon as I get a permanent address.

I don't know Hester's address now. She may be home or at Ames. Please let her know I'm O.K. and that you've heard from me. I suppose she's got some football hero on her list by now

Be seeing you soon. Watch the papers, who knows I might make the last page anyway.

Love
(signed) Delmer

Late at night the day following the arrival of the letter, I was able to talk to MOM by telephone from San Francisco.

Interesting that after months of not hearing from me, the folks got the cable one day, the letter the next and the phone call the next.

Then while I was home on leave the following Telegram was received.

WESTERN
UNION

wm cs 69 Govt
WUX Arlington Virg 352 M May 7
Guy Avi Wiley
4 Park Ave
Glenwood, Iowa.

The Navey department is glad to inform you that your son Delmar Dean Wiley Radioman Third Class united States Navey prviously reported missing following action in the Performance of his duty is now reported to be a survivor it is probable that your Son has already been in touch with you advising you as to his Welfare and whereabouts and anziety caused you by the previous message is deeply regretted.

Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs
The Chief of Naval Personnel...315 PM

In my letter to my folks from Guadalcanal, I said, *"Altogether I had enough experiences to write a book. I'm kinda rushed now, but as soon as I can get around to it, I'll write the whole story. It's stranger than fiction, believe me."* So forty three years later, now that I am retired, I finally have found the time to write it. It has taken me two years of off and on working on it to do it, but I feel now that it was worth the trouble.

I hope you have enjoyed my story and that I have been able to describe it so that you could somehow experience this adventure as I did.